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The Fascination of the Unknown

By
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Brooklyn, N. Y.

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To

My Mother

First, and Finest Critic

of my efforts

as a Preacher of the Gospel.

Introduction

FOR every explorer the fringe upon the edge of a newly discovered continent suggests the undiscovered country that lies beyond the faint, blue horizon. Every time Columbus returned to Spain, the secrets of the unknown land kept pulling the discoverer back to those far off realms, lying behind the clouds. But the soul is the true *terra incognita*—the undiscovered country, holding lodes bright with treasure for later explorers. Having confessed the fascination of the unknown, it must be added that there is also a fascination of the known; its known elements of truth, and character in a noble man—embodied truths by which men live, and for which brave men would gladly die.

Here in Brooklyn we know what manner of man is the author of this book. He had his education in Belfast, with its university, its lecture-halls and its library. He came to our city by way of Montreal in Canada. Today, as pastor of the historic Dutch Reformed Church on the Heights, and the successor to Drs. Bethune, J. Douglas Adam and

F. F. Shannon, he has won a host of admirers. His many friends on the Western continent have asked that these sermons should be published. The people of a church, who listen to such preaching as Dr. Davidson's, must dwell in a summer-time, never interrupted by winter.

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.

Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Preface

IT gives me very great pleasure to testify to the value of these sermons by my friend and fellow labourer Dr. Thomas W. Davidson.

They are earnest, evangelical, persuasive and timely homelies which feed the souls of men and women and leave lasting satisfaction in the reader's heart. There is nothing laboured or trite in them, nor does their excellence do more than exhibit the normal ministry of the author. He is well versed in the kind of preaching which they represent, and he has magnified his ministry by his sound knowledge of the Scriptures and of a true authoritative divinity. These discourses should be studied by younger preachers and teachers and by all laymen who read sermons as a fine example of the profitable workman in holy truths, who brings forth things new and old from the exhaustless treasury of the Word.

S. PARKES CADMAN.

Central Congregational Church, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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I

THE FASCINATION OF THE UNKNOWN

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore."
—JOSHUA 3:4.

THIS was the message of God to the Hebrew people of old, at the close of their wanderings in the wilderness. For the most part it had been a period of weariness, misfortune, and misery. Now they had come to the Jordan, and once the river was crossed, they would all say good-bye to the old life, and greet the new. Strangely conflicting must have been their emotions as they stood on the border of the unknown. Joshua, their leader, issued minute instructions to the host. In order to secure their careful attention to his commands, he added these suggestive words: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." What he meant was: "This is a new experience for you: there has been no opportunity of rehearsing for it; it is the first thing of its kind that has come into your history; ye have not passed this way heretofore, therefore sanctify yourselves, in view of the unknown future."

Now from this incident in Israel's history, there is a principle springs to light which may fairly be termed *The Fascination of the Unknown.* It is a

very powerful principle, and is always identified with the romantic side of life. Sometimes we are told that romance has disappeared from life, but this is not so. Romance lurks around every corner, peeps at us from prosaic places, and rushes into prominence at the most unlikely moments. It was this consideration which led George Eliot to say most truly, that "any intelligent calculation of the expected, must include a large allowance of the *unexpected.*" What she evidently means is that one can never tell what emergencies may arise at any moment, and because of this life's operations need to be conducted on a wide margin. It is in the margins of common life as with money on a journey—to have enough, one must always have a little too much. These margins make room for romance, adventure, possibility, for as life unfolds to us all it is full of fascination; we "have not passed this way heretofore."

LOVE OF ADVENTURE

The Fascination of the Unknown makes a fitting appeal to our love of adventure in common life. This love of adventure is—within limits—perfectly legitimate. Man is the eternal seeker: the fascination of the Unknown lures him on. Indeed the dullest life has each day a new possibility. This is what constitutes the real fascination of living.

The late Professor William James, a few days

before his death, wrote one of his most charming essays on "what makes life worth while." His thesis was that life is made worth while by the new challenges to adventure that come with each day, challenges that call forth the best that is in us. Each day we must look for new combinations of circumstances, which only a living spirit can bring into being, and we must feel the fascination that arises from the fact that we "have not passed this way heretofore." Every life holds unsuspected stores of adventure. At first we thought it was only a field where mushrooms and blackberries might be gathered, though indeed both tasks are in their way delightful at a certain stage of being. But as the lamp of experience soon reveals, the field of life is full of gold, and silver, and precious stones, so that no matter how modest our circumstances, all life is enhanced and ennobled by the possibility of association with Christ. Christ can enrich the soul by the pearl of great price. So that Dr. Harry E. Fosdick is right when he says that "the most neglected real estate in the world is the ground on which we stand to-day, and at this moment."

There is an old proverb which reminds us that "Adventures meet the adventurous." One of the most singular illustrations of the proverb is furnished by the discovery of glass. How did we get glass which has played such a part in civilization? Why, we owe its discovery to the blunders of ad-

venturous Phœnician sailors, who long ago found themselves stranded on the north coast of Africa in the middle of a sandy desert. They went out to search for stones on which to place their kettles and pans while cooking, but on finding none, they thought of the lumps of saltpetre which had formed part of their cargo. These they brought along, made a fire on them, and cooked their simple meal. The heat melted the saltpetre, which mixed freely with the ashes and the glowing sand, and as the liquid mass cooled, it became before their eyes a hard transparent substance. The result was the discovery of glass! It is true such a thing happens only once perhaps in a million years, and yet what seemed accidental was not entirely so. There was the love of adventure on the part of these sailors; the fascination of making the best of their circumstances in an unknown territory, and as ever "fortune favours the brave." It was the lion-hearted General Gordon who once said that "Great Britain was made, not so much by her statesmen as by her adventurers," and the words were true.

There is a wonderful appeal made to us in every story of adventure. I suppose it is the old migratory instinct, which still lingers in us, that stirs us with strange thrills of enthusiasm as we read the story of some famous traveller in unknown lands. There is an explorer latent in every man whose mind is large enough to have interests out-

side himself. It is this element of adventure in us all which attracts us to a great explorer like Sir Walter Raleigh, who has been called "The Shepherd of Ocean." One of the finest pictures Millais ever painted is entitled "The Boyhood of Sir Walter Raleigh," but I have frequently thought it might have been most fittingly given as a sub-title: "The Fascination of the Unknown." The picture shows a bluff and hearty old sailor recounting his travels and exploits in the West to two boys, one of whom is the youthful Raleigh, whose heart leaps within him, and whose fancy conjures up a glowing picture of adventure. As the old sailor talks, young Raleigh hears the call of the unknown, and at once the little old-fashioned toy, which up to that moment had constituted his world, is thrown aside into a corner of the room, and ever afterwards neglected. In one brief hour he has grown from childhood to youth, and must needs follow the gleam. So the call comes to you and to me to follow the spiritual quest; to follow the gleam of God in the coming year, for we "have not passed this way heretofore." It may be a passage of Scripture, like our text, or it may be a sudden vision of truth, or it may be the touch of a golden sunset, but it becomes the occasion of the sunrise of the soul. At once, those who hear the Voice, those who see the Glory, those who feel the fascination of the Unknown, go forth on the quest of a fuller and a richer life. Make the life of the common day,

a challenge, not a compromise; an adventure for God, not a mere animal existence; this will transform the commonplace, and give dignity to the lowliest duty.

THE MODERATION OF ADVENTURE

The Fascination of the Unknown needs to be met and mastered, by the presence of a living faith in God. Such a faith will moderate adventure, or at least direct it into worthy channels. Norman Duncan, in his beautiful volume, entitled "Dr. Grenfell's Parish," tells of meeting an old Newfoundlander, who had fished from one harbour for sixty years. He computed that he had put out to sea at least twenty thousand times; that he had many times been swept out to sea with the icepacks; that he had frequently been frozen to the seat of his punt; that he had weathered hundreds of gales, and been wrecked more times than he could remember: yet the fascination of the Unknown as far as the sea was concerned, appealed to him in his old age, as strong as it did in youth, and he wished he could live his life again, only with a deepened sense of the presence of God, by a growing faith.

Our position today calls for faith. As we pass the New Year we resemble the people of Israel in the days of Joshua. We are like travellers about to start on another stage of the journey. At such a moment the fascination of the Unknown

makes its appeal to us all, and we need to meet and master this fascination by the pressure of faith in the Eternal God, whose years do not change.

Of course in one sense there is no New Year. One day succeeds the other, and there is nothing to mark one day off from the others. But all the same, in an important sense, there is a New Year. January first may be the counterpart of December thirty-first in that the flush of dawn, and shadows of evening have brightened and darkened on the two days, at almost the same interval. Yet in the night between a shadowy line was passed, and with the light of the morning, a new year dawns upon the world.

January first is different from December thirty-first. On the latter we wrote "The year of our Lord, 1922"; the next day we write: "The year of our Lord, 1923." We take a step onward, so that it may be truthfully said of each of us: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

The great question is, How can we best face the Unknown future? It was said by a Cabinet Minister, recently, that at the end of seventy years, the two outstanding days in his life were his wedding day, and the first day he spent in the city of Athens. All of this may be true, but what if each one of us should say to the New Year: "Welcome, New Year, which by God's help I purpose making the best year of my life!"

WHERE DO YOU PUT CHRIST?

The carpenter's shop offered our Lord a career that was worthy, worthy of the Son of God. This was because He put the will of God before everything else. The question that determines the texture of the New Year is: "Where shall I put Christ?" A tourist on the Continent of Europe tells of a visit paid to one of the great Cathedrals. The building was marvellous in its magnificence. He observed several beautiful carved images, amongst them being the twelve apostles, the Virgin Mother, and some of the ancient saints. But away in a remote corner he discovered an insignificant image of Christ: it stood alone, and unnoticed in the dark. The dazzling light which filled the building brought out prominently the beautiful proportions of the other figures, but did not send its beams to the Christ. It was in the shadow of the back-ground.

The question, therefore, that pierces to the core of every life is: "Where do you put Christ?" His Kingdom is the one thing that counts. The noble words of David Livingstone, who was a truly adventurous soul, may well prove worthy of a niche in your New Year's resolve: "I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in its relation to the Kingdom of Christ. If anything I have will advance the interests of that Kingdom, it shall be given up or kept, as by keeping or giving up I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom

I owe all my hopes for time and Eternity. May grace be given me to adhere to this." Such a resolve means the presence of a living faith in God, through Christ, who calls us to be His followers amid the attractions that appeal to our senses from day to day.

Another great Scotchman—Lord Shaw, of Dunfermline—made by faith the motto of his life: "Turn every trouble into an adventure." It was his talisman to success through his entire career, as the Lord Advocate of Scotland.

WIDER INTEREST IN LIFE

The Fascination of the Unknown gives a widespread interest in life, and supplies ample opportunity to find the way of helpful service. The late Bishop of Lincoln—Bishop Wordsworth—was an example unto many in this respect. Of every new opening, and new interest he heard the words: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." On one occasion a visitor called at the palace, and venturing to talk to the Bishop's wife about some little hobby of his own, inquired if the Bishop was at all interested in such trifles. Her instant reply was: "The Bishop is interested in everything." How much brighter life would be for us all, if the fascination did not fade away from the common things we touch and handle. There is a world of truth, and a wealth of philosophy in the lines of Robert Louis Stevenson: "The world is so full of a num-

ber of things, I am sure we ought all to be happy as Kings."

I do not know when I have been more deeply moved by the daily press of this country, than when an extract was given the other day from the will of a woman who had just died in England. Here is the extract: "The sea has always been a friend of mine. If the two boat-men whom I have so often employed are still alive, I would like them to take my body in one of their boats, early in the morning, when no one is about, and no other boats are in the bay, and bury me off Blackhead, in the deep sea." The sea with its mystery, and ever changing moods, she wished to be her final earthly home. Why? She does not answer our question, but possibly her husband, or her sons, found a similar resting place there during the World War. Or possibly the echo of ancient tides surged through her soul, as part of the rhythm of life. The place where she desired to be buried is a place where the waters are never calm: outside Blackhead the waves from the great Atlantic, tumble and plunge through the North Sound, into Galway Bay, where they strike on the mighty rocks which guard the West coast of Ireland, and prevent the Atlantic from sweeping over the country. Perhaps this woman, so lonely in life, will find friendship and solace there, where many a mariner has gone down, and where the treasures of the great Spanish Armada garnish the floor of the ocean. At any rate, the

request in her will, reveals one to whom the fascination of the Unknown was a reality, and it widened her interest beyond the span of mortal life. To many the voice of the Ocean is the Voice of God in the soul. In this connection it is not without interest that the word "Soul" is akin to the word "Sea": that in the days when Greece was young, both words had the same ancestor. Dr. Frank Crane is right when he says that "There is nothing in nature looks so much like a soul as the Ocean." Every one who dwells on it must feel how true this is. The waters stretch away to the distant horizon, and "marry the sky, behind a bridal veil of mist. Here you find Infinity—you feel it. Here is the velvet touch of mystery. Here is the same heaving inquietude I find within me." And it may be added here is the same fascination of the unknown, that confronts you in every human soul; a fascination which makes the study of human nature, the most interesting study in the world.

POSSIBILITIES OF THE UNKNOWN

Life's greatness begins for us all when we realize the possibilities of the soul. It has been said of Columbus that the instinct of an unknown continent burned within him. That is true of each one of us, for man as we have seen is the eternal seeker. The fascination of the unknown lures him on in a perpetual search. There is nothing so delightful to young people as a secret, except, perhaps, the

joy of finding it out. The possibilities of the unknown are therefore possibilities of soul power. Well might Lucy Larcom sing:

"I said it on the mountain path,
I said it on the mountain stairs—
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

"The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
The light without us, and within—
Life with its unlocked treasuries,
God's riches, are for all to win."

This view of life looks for adventure, as a means to a higher end. The late Jacob Riis, on one occasion when he was congratulated on his widespread, and successful interest in life, said: "Well, I put myself in the way of things happening; that's all." It sounds very simple, but is it as simple as it looks? That depends. The man who goes through life self-absorbed, sees no vision. But the man who takes the way of Christ, the way of the Cross, the way of high adventure with His Lord, for such a man the future never loses its fascination, and appeal. The unexplored makes life worth living. On an old map of Africa, the names of the places that had been opened up could be seen; but over the central parts of the Continent, the word "*unexplored*" was inscribed. So across the face of the Continent of 1923, the word "unexplored" is written. There may be meadows of prosperity, or deserts of adversity, or rivers of pleasure, or mountains of vision: we do not know. "Ye have not passed this

way heretofore." The book of the year is still sealed with seven seals, and they are not all broken at the same time.

THE WONDERFUL YEAR

It was the poet Dryden—whose chief characteristic was intensity—who called the year 1666 Annus Mirabilis; the wonderful year, because in it occurred two events that had a decisive influence on the life of England. One was the great fire of London, which at first assumed the aspect of a national disaster; but which in the final event proved to be an immense blessing, inasmuch as it destroyed the breeding ground of the Great Plague, and compelled the people of London to rebuild their houses in better fashion. The other was the repulse of the Dutch, which opened for England a doorway into the Orient. But it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the doings of that Annus Mirabilis may shrivel into insignificance when compared with the doings of 1923. America is returning to her proper place of influence among the nations. Europe at long last is facing reality in the question of reparations, and settlements. India is coming of age, and will have on hand her own problems raised by a wider measure of self-government. Ireland's star of hope is slowly climbing the horizon, and any day may appear in splendour. As for Turkey, the European nations have ventured on a great experiment in permitting

her a new lease of life, in the government of Christian races. In view of these typical national adventures, life promises to be unusually intense.

We have all a great capacity for forgetting, especially our benefits. It is fitting on this day that we should build the memory of our mercies into a memorial, as Joshua did with the stones from the bed of the Jordan, and leave them on the river's bank as a witness to God's faithfulness and goodness. Even if the past year has brought to us loss and suffering, yet out of the loss we may take the gain, and press forward. A soldier who had fought in the Civil War subsequently became stone blind, but very happy, and always proudly wore his medals on his breast. Somebody ventured to ask him: "What do you do in these days of darkness?" "Do," he replied, almost scornfully: "Why I thank God that for fifty years I had the gift of sight, and that I saw Abraham Lincoln, and heard the bugles call for the victory of truth and righteousness." Noble soul! So to remember that we have been privileged to hear the bugles call for service, and in some measure to respond, should bring comfort in the darkest hour of life.

HOMELAND OF SOUL

In view of the unknown future, perhaps I am writing for some who fear that they may miss the path of service, and the true Homeland of the Soul. Depend upon it, you will not lose it if only you keep

Christ in view. In one of Plato's dialogues, there is a beautiful passage, on which it does one good to dwell in these days. Some one had been asking Socrates how one in this world could get guidance in the large and deep sense; guidance in the great business of living. Socrates with perfect candor, and yet with a strain of sadness, replied, that just as one going on a voyage would naturally consult those who had gone before him, and pay heed to their remarks, so should we face the unknown future with the best wisdom we can secure; but that "every man on the voyage takes a risk unless there be somewhere, some sure word from God, on which as a safe barque, one can make the passage with security." It was a wise forecast by the old sage: "some sure word from God." Such a word is much needed by us all.

Let me, in closing, present this sure word by means of an incident, which is a parable of life. Some years ago a party of travellers on a New Year's Day were for the first time passing over one of the Swiss Alps. After they had gone a considerable distance, it began to snow heavily, when the oldest of the guides was noticed to shake his head gravely, and to remark: "If the wind rises, we are all lost." Scarcely had he spoken when a gale arose, the snow was whirled in drifts, so that all the way-marks were obliterated. At length, one of the guides who had gone a little in advance was heard shouting: "The Cross! The Cross! We

are all right." What had the Cross to do with it? It was one of those religious memorials set up by some private individual for a personal reason, which had at length become a well-known landmark for the travellers; hence the moment the guide saw it, he knew his bearings, and what direction to take. To take the way of the Cross, was to follow the path of helpful and highest service for all the company.

What was true of that symbol in the case of these travellers, is true in all instances of the thing which it signifies. Although we have not travelled the path heretofore, Christ and His Cross are the true word of God to one and all, and the way of best service to humanity. To everyone who is in danger of wandering into some forbidden way, through the fascinations of sin, Christ's voice is heard above all the voices of earth: "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Not only do we hear Christ's voice: He also offers us His hand, so that if we stumble He will hold us fast. On another occasion in Switzerland, a tourist climbing a high mountain drew back in fear at a dangerous corner, when the guide put out his hand, saying, "Take hold of that; that hand never lost a man." So Christ's hand will hold us up and strengthen us, as we travel through the Unknown Year, and will steady us in the last and greatest adventure of all.

II

THE ROMANCE OF RELIGION

"Whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain."—MATTHEW v : 41.

WE have here the romance of religion as understood by Jesus. The passage has frequently perplexed many good people, but once we get the Master's viewpoint, these perplexities pass away. Failing to get His viewpoint we are usually as much puzzled as the Sunday School teacher who gave this text to her class of small boys to memorize for the following Sabbath. To her astonishment, and amusement, one boy when his turn came, said: "Whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him *by train*." At any rate that boy had read into the text a meaning of his own, not without sense, and to him a touch of romance, which is more perhaps than some of us have tried to do.

Let us look at the circumstances from this point of view. Life was rather dull and drab in our Lord's day: the spectacular opportunities for courage were few and far between. But the commonplace opportunities lasted all the day, and every day of the week. One of these commonplace occurrences was temporary impressment for service. If

a Roman official were lost in the woods, and met a Jew he could compel him to go with him a mile as his guide. If one were carrying a burden along the way, and it got too heavy, under this law of the Roman Empire, if he met another he could oblige him to accompany him a mile, if necessary. This was especially true where the Governor of a District, or his representative, desired to requisition certain services for the State, such as the taking a message for a mile: he could commandeer the first man he met. It was sometimes a rather disagreeable duty, but it had to be done.

THE LOVE MILE

Our Lord here refers to this custom, but he enlarges its outlook, and gives to it a moral and spiritual application, shot through with the spirit of romance. The law said: "You must go a mile, which is your duty," but Jesus said: "Go with him twain," which means "do more than your duty." The first mile is compulsory—that is, what you ought: the second mile is voluntary, that is, what you may. To stop at the first mile often makes a man a literalist—like the Pharisees of Christ's day; but to gladly travel the second mile makes a man a Christian, of the romantic type. The second mile is the love-mile, and the path of the love-mile to the real follower of the Master, has a fascination that is all its own.

The subject arising from our Lord's words is

therefore the Romance of Religion, and George Meredith was right when he said that we lose the sky for a ceiling if we allow romance to die out of life. There is perhaps no word in the language used with such a vague idea as to its real meaning than this word romance. It is supposed to be the sworn enemy of punctuality, solvency, and the laws of arithmetic, which have real foundations in fact. Romance is the wild and the doubtful: Reality the tame and the safe. Romance is the open country, while Reality is the crowded city; and the human mind oscillates between these two poles of thought. It is too large a question to discuss in detail at present, but for our immediate purpose, I want to take Romance, as the full flower of life. This signifies the joy of freedom, inner freedom, and the glow of service that does not cease when the letter of the law has been fulfilled. There is a distinction and an honour, that go further than the first mile, and by doing it in the Master's spirit the courage of the commonplace is seen to be greater than the courage of the crisis. To go through the commonplace with a cheerful heart, a ready mind, a loving surrender, is the romance of religion Jesus had in view, and the great need of the world in our day. A young miner was asked, the other day: "*Why did* you go on strike last Spring?" His reply was: "Because life was so dreadfully dull." That is what many still find, hence the need of a religion with a dash of romance in its content, and the

religion of Jesus supplies this need. He has summed it up in this great, and beautiful, and far-reaching principle to guide the lives and the conduct of His followers: "Whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain."

SECRET OF HIGHEST LIFE

The Romance of the Second Mile lifts the duties of religion into the atmosphere of the Divine Love. We are all familiar with the first mile, the regulation mile, the mile in which we have no choice, but the beauty and joy of life consists in having the disposition and temper which goes beyond what is compulsory, to what is voluntary. According to our Lord, this is the righteousness which exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, without which we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Some of you may think that this is a hard saying, and I admit at the first blush it looks so, but it is the *secret of the highest life.* If you are compelled to go one mile, then of your own free will go another, and you will defeat the malice of the necessity, by the romance of going one better.

Most of us make an effort to travel the first mile, with more or less success. There are certain laws we all must keep unless we wish to find ourselves in prison. Custom imposes on us all certain unwritten laws, which we transgress at our peril. But these things belong to the first mile: to the letter rather than the spirit. The second mile is the

mile not of custom, but of romance: it is joyous, because voluntary, and thus surpasses all mercenary motives. The romance of the second mile lifts the duties of life into a higher atmosphere, and makes us willing to go beyond the strict requirements of the case. Indeed, all the beauty and grace of life are found in travelling the second mile.

BETTER THAN NECESSARY

The value of the second mile is great when considered from this point of view. Emergencies are happening to us all, however hum-drum our lives may be. We leave our homes in the morning, not expecting any demands to be made on our time, or any interference with the day's engagements, when suddenly we are compelled to go off in a direction we never contemplated. We all know what this means: we are compelled to go one mile, and at the end of this mile the question arises: "What are you going to do further?" The next mile is the real test: if we can only bring into it the romance, the spirit, the mind of our Master then we travel it not with feet laden with leaden shoes, but with an elasticity of tread that springs from a loving heart.

This is the great principle of useful service, and also of real success in life. There is an old business firm which has for its motto: "A little better than is necessary." That is the secret of success. The lives that are useful serve with a will: they do their duty, and a little more. The late Mr. Andrew Car-

negie, in an address before a graduating class in New York, gave some good advice to the young on how to gain success in life. He said: "There are several classes of young men. There are those that do not do all their duty; there are those also who profess to do their duty; and there is a third class, far better than the other two; those that do their duty, *and a little more*. You young lads have begun well. Keep on. Don't bother about the future. Do your duty, and a little more, and the future will take care of itself."

This principle is true in all departments of life. Life is only of value when there is a margin over and above what is necessary. Take the position of a minister. If a minister calculates to a nicety how much he should do in order to secure the favour of his people, and so earn the salary that is paid him, then all the romance of service is gone, and his influence for good will soon follow. The minister, and his office bearers, are all called to do the "little more" than is necessary: this is what is meant by the romance of religion; and this alone will bring in the Kingdom of God, and so lift life into the atmosphere of the Divine Love.

A NEW STANDARD

The Romance of the Second Mile transforms the burdens of the average man into blessings, that enrich the character and life. We sometimes hear a man say: "I'm no saint, but I'm as good as the average man." This is said, I suppose, to appease

the conscience of the speaker, or to justify a certain line of conduct in the eyes of others, but it always makes me feel uncomfortable. On the lips of the man who says it, the words may be true, but is it really worth saying? I question if it is. If your health is no better than that of the average man, it is not much to boast of, for most persons have ailments or physical defects, of one sort or another. If you are no more prosperous than the average man, you are certainly not too well off. The statistics tell us that a large percentage of the men who go into business for themselves are far from successful. The average man today is likely to be hard up: he is more than ready for his wages the moment they are due, and it is well if he can make both ends meet. Nor is the average man's intelligence very extensive, or at least accurate. The standard of the average man ought not to be our standard. We should be ambitious to raise the general level of mankind.

Now Christ has introduced into this world a new standard which ought to shame the man who runs to cover with the plea: "I'm as good as the average man." Christ's standard says: "Don't be satisfied with the average, go two miles with the man who needs you rather than one, and by doing so you will soon transform the burdens of your life into blessings."

Let us test this principle in the light of our Lord's words. Picture a Jewish peasant in Christ's day saving his little crop, in a patch of ground near

which our Lord is passing with His disciples. A Roman soldier comes along, and says: "See here, my man; carry this burden for me." At once all the hate possible to a Jew in the presence of Gentile domination rises in him, and every step of his journey is servile slavery, for the burden carries with it the whole incubus of the Roman rule. He marches along the weary mile, in front of his master of sullen mien, all the while writhing inwardly with futile vengeful feelings, and mutters to himself what his people will do one day when power comes their way.

Now picture another peasant, later on in the day who has the Kingdom of Heaven within his heart, and who desires to be kind to even the evil and unthankful. He takes up his burden pleasantly, resolved to overstep his task, and to kill his enemy with kindness. The romance of Christ's religion is to him a blessed reality, with the result that he goes not merely the legal limit, but the second mile. The motive makes it a pleasant variation from his own toil, and the result is that his burden is transformed into a blessing that enriches his character for ever. In addition, he puts such magnanimity into his task that the other man is also influenced for good.

ATTITUDE TO LIFE

It was the first mile people that crucified our Lord, because He told them it was not sufficient.

He showed them that they could go the first mile, and remain mean, and base, and selfish. So it finally came to the point where those who first heard our Lord must crucify themselves or Christ. They found it easier to crucify Him, which they did. One of the first mile folk was Judas: another was the rich young ruler. On the other hand, a life like that of St. Paul shows us one who went the second mile, and one whose burdens were transformed into transcendent blessings: he, at length, even gloried in the burdens and infirmities of life, so that in him the power of Redeeming Love should be made manifest.

It is here we reach the crux of the whole subject, and must determine what our attitude towards life ought to be. There are many illustrations of men in all departments of life whose burdens have become blessings by falling in line with Christ's doctrine in this passage—the doctrine of the little extra. Some years ago, in an English town, a youth had a subordinate position in a law office. The office was situated within sight of the railway station, and the heads of the firm frequently called on certain of their clerks to go long railway journeys, on short notice. This particular youth observed that no one was quite ready to rush off on a moment's notice, so he determined that if his chance ever came, he would be ready. He brought down to the office, next day, a small bag containing a few things that he would need if called upon, and

kept it under his desk in readiness for the opportunity. At last his chance came. One day the chief of his department said to him: "Do you think you can catch the train now coming into the station? If so, go, and we'll telegraph instructions to you at the next stopping place." So at once this youth went off, did his piece of work in a satisfactory way, and finally as Mr. Reader Harris: K. C. took a high place in the councils of the British Empire. It was the romance of the second mile that first started him in the right direction, on his career as a great and useful lawyer in his day.

The same principle is true in the realm of medicine and surgery. Some years ago, there died in the city of New York an eminent surgeon—the late Dr. Robert Dawburn—who guided his life work on similar lines. In sewing up a wound, after an operation, one of his students observed that he always tied three knots, where the regulation custom was to tie only two. Asked about it one day, Dr. Dawburn replied: "The third is my sleeping knot; it may not be necessary to tie it, but it makes the matter much safer, and I find I sleep better for it." That is only another instance of the principle of our Lord, and of doing a little more than could be properly demanded.

REALM OF RELIGION

But it is in the realm of religion that we see the highest illustration of this principle. By religion,

we mean that power which makes a man choose what is lofty and noble, rather than what is mean and selfish: that puts courage into timorous hearts, and gladness into clouded spirits: that consoles men in grief, and enables them to bear heavy burdens. What power can do all this? It is the romance of religion learned from our royal Master, that gives us this power; the power that uplifts men out of the domination of the material, and sets their feet firm in the things that are spiritual; the pathway of the second mile.

It was the late Rupert Brooke—romantic soul that he was, who thanked God in the early days of the war, for "matching the men with the hour." But the truth is, God has always men who are equal to the hour, and they are the men from whom we learn most concerning the religion of the second mile. Such a man was James Chalmers, the great missionary of the South Sea Islands. His life was an average life at the start, and frequently the duties of the day pressed heavily upon him. Yet in recalling, at the end of twenty-one years of toil, his experiences on the foreign field what did he say? He said: "Give me back all the experience of the past twenty-one years, its shipwrecks, its savages, with spears and clubs—give it all back, with all its burdens, and I will still be your missionary." The romance of the second mile had turned for him all his burdens into blessings, as it will also do for you and me. Going a little further

than you need in the right direction—that is the secret of all real and spiritual progress.

The poets have not failed to recognize this great principle, and to set it forth in language we cannot misunderstand. Long ago, Shakespeare made Iago say of Desdemona: "She holds it a vice in her goodness, not to do more, than required." Was our Shakespeare a partizan, or a seer, when he wrote in that strain? Undoubtedly he was a seer, one who had the seeing eye, and seeing soul, and whose line is quite in keeping with the teachings of our Divine Lord. Another poet of modern times recognizes the same truth, the same romance of the second mile, in a poem of which I quote two verses. He writes:

Stern duty said, "go walk a mile
And help thy brother bear his load."
I walked reluctantly, meanwhile
My heart grew soft, by help bestowed.

The Christ said: "Go another mile."
I went, and duty spake no more,
For Love arose, and with a smile
Took all the burdens that I bore.

METHOD OF JESUS

The Romance of the Second Mile is the method and spirit of Jesus applied to the courtesies and conduct of our modern life. Of course, there are some foolish people who are always assuring us that the age of romance is dead, but this is not so. As a matter of fact there is more of romance in the

world today than at any previous time, but what is needed at the moment to allow romance to open our eyes to the glamour and the glory of common service.

Take, for example, hospitality. In consequence of compulsion we often do things that have the look of hospitality, but there is something lacking, inasmuch as we only do what decency makes it impossible to avoid. That is not courtesy; that is not real hospitality. Real hospitality has a touch of romance in its flavour, and is not in bondage to the mere conventions of life.

This compulsion of decency affects not only our hospitality, but also our beneficence. Some good cause needs friends, and the friends of the cause are subscribing; but when the turn of many good people comes, they say: "Let me see the list," and, having glanced at the list, they dispense their gifts on a basis, not how much they can give, but how little, in view of what those on the list have done. There was once a minister called on the great and good William Wilberforce soliciting a contribution towards a piece of work he had in hand. He was asked to wait over for the night, and told that his application would be attended to next morning. When he came down to breakfast, it was only too evident that serious news had reached his host by the morning mail. Wilberforce said to him: "My friend, I have what is considered bad news. I find that I am some thousands of pounds poorer than I

believed myself to be yesterday evening. This has taught me a useful lesson as to the instability of riches, and the necessity of making good use of them while they remain with us. I meant yesterday to have given you twenty-five pounds, but permit me now to hand you this cheque for fifty for your good work." That was the romance of the second mile; that was true service because voluntary; that was the road of the loving heart, and love is ever its own reward.

The follower of Jesus does not guide his life by law but by love, and therefore it is both beautiful and free. Love is a constant travelling of the second mile. On the last occasion I visited Scotland, one of the most hallowing memories I treasure was that of a pilgrimage to the grave of the late Professor Henry Drummond. It was a simple grave, beneath the shadow of old Stirling Castle, and looking out on the far-famed field of Bannockburn, but to me the heritage of Drummond's life and labours had an interest that nothing else could share. His religion was at all times the religion of the second mile: it was the method and spirit of Jesus, applied to our complex modern life. In his own words, the romance of life to Drummond was "to move among people on the common street; to live among them not as a monk, but as a brother man with brother men; to serve God, not with form or ritual, but in the free impulse of the soul; to bear the burden of society, and relieve its

needs; to carry on the multitudinous activities of the city, whether social, commercial, or philanthropic, in Christ's spirit, and for Christ's ends; "this is the religion of the Son of Man, and the only meetness for Heaven, which has much reality in it."

The method and spirit of Jesus have also found illustration in the life of Mr. Arthur Nash, of Cincinnati, in his big business, all built upon the principles of the Golden Rule. Mr. Nash is one of the best modern examples of the romance of religion, which with him means high adventure with Christ. His religion also is the religion of the second mile, and it is to me a rare honour to be able to call him my friend. Arthur Nash is not only a pioneer in modern industrial relations: he is the greatest pioneer and pathfinder amongst a rapidly increasing band of men, who are making the law of life our Lord's words: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." He has put that law of Christ definitely and completely into operation in his business, and as one who has had the privilege of going through his entire plant, and studying the man and his work at close range, I gladly bear my testimony to the success of his venture, the adventure of a man who has dared to walk the second mile with Christ.

SUPREME EXAMPLE

The Cross of Christ is the supreme example of how God Himself travels the second mile. That

Cross is not as the schoolmen used to think—just the exact and carefully measured equivalent for man's guilt; the agony and the shedding of blood being precisely proportioned to the sin, and the number of sinners to be saved. We have moved away from these mediæval positions, and can never return to them again. The Cross of Christ is rather the high adventure of God; the offering of God's all for the salvation of a race He loved amid its ruin by sin. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When God pardons it is not by a deed drawn up in legal form. He pardons as a father pardons. And Christ is our best guide here. The father pardons, not in any half-hearted fashion, but with all the buoyancy of His nature. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." There is a romance about the description that is refreshing. St. Paul draws attention to it in his great letter to the Romans, when he says: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This is how God acts: this is how Christ reveals to us the Father's heart of Love; and this is surely to be the rule for our lives, if our religion is to become the religion of the Second Mile.

III

THE GARDEN OF GOD

"Awake! O North wind; and come thou South: blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out."
—SOLOMON'S SONG iv: 16.

MY subject today is the Garden of God. It was suggested to me during the past Summer while visiting a private garden, in the most beautiful part of Connecticut. I can still close my eyes, and I am back in that glorious garden, perhaps the most beautiful to be found in any part of the country. The simple fact is, it is more than a garden: it is a veritable Garden of God.

It is as impossible to describe the enchantment of my memory-garden, as it is to paint a soul: such loveliness must be felt, and then re-captured in visions, and dreams. In the presence of such bewildering beauty, one can at least be thankful for the vision. This was the attitude of Kingsley, who said: "Beauty is God's handwriting; a way-side sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, fair sky, fair flower, and thank Him for it, who is the Author of all loveliness." From the lawn near the mansion to the vine-covered lattice close to the Indian House, with its curios, and quaint souvenirs at the foot of the garden, covering some five or six

acres, may be seen flowers, flowers, flowers, shrubs, plants, and spices, all laid out in the most exquisite order, and every kind artistically separated by grass-carpeted walks.

The Lady of the Mansion, not only enjoys the beautiful, but with a heart full of the influences of the Divine Spirit, opens her grounds daily to visitors.

Announcements are made by her through the public press to all who dwell in the vicinity, when the flowers are at their best, to visit her garden, and thus share in her joy. While strolling through the grounds, on two or three occasions, with a friend I caught myself repeating the lines that unbidden leaped to memory:

"The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth;
One is nearer God's heart in a garden,
Than anywhere else on earth."

MEADOWS OF MEMORY

Since that memorable visit, my thoughts have turned scores of times to the text before us today: "Awake! O North wind; and come thou South: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," and frequently I have linked these words with my memories of that August day. The text is taken from a seldom read book of the Bible; yet a book rich in lyrical, and emotional expression: a book which has for its object the heightening and

hallowing of human love. But human love in its highest form will always conduct us upward towards that Divine Love, of which it is the symbol and the sign. In addition to this, the sheer poetic beauty of our text makes a rich and powerful appeal to us all, so that I make no apology today for taking this passage as the keynote of my message on the Garden of God. As we allow the passage to sink into our souls with its music, and suggestion of mysticism, it will, I am persuaded, call up ideas and images, that are associated with all that is highest, holiest, and tenderest in human life. It was with such thoughts in his mind that a modern poet of distinction gave expression to his sense of unique companionship in his own garden in a few significant lines:—

"I'm never alone in the garden," he said;
"I'm never alone with the flowers:
It seems like I'm meeting the wonderful dead
Out here with these blossoms of ours.

"And, there's never a bush, or a plant, or a tree,
But somebody loved it of old.
And the souls of the Angels come talking to me
Through the petals of crimson and gold."

Let me now invite you today to accompany me in a walk through these meadows of memory. One of the choicest things about a garden is its power to store the memory with pictures, and to make the mind vibrate with associations that may be drawn

on in days to come. This is especially true of the garden in our thought today. The sweet odours of the spices still fill the air for me; the songs of the birds, and the beauty and profusion of the flowers are before me; the shadows on the distant hills, and the sound of the breeze in the trees, I can still see and hear; and highest of all, the happy human fellowship, all are mine. Let us try and recapture some of these impressions, and in order that we may do so, let all join in the aspiration of our text: "Awake! O North wind; and come thou South: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." It is an aspiration that we all may devoutly offer, to the Spirit of the Living God.

GARDEN—A GOOD TEACHER

Notice at the outset that *a garden is a good teacher of great moral and spiritual truths.* It is full of similitudes, filled with the deepest significance for moral and spiritual growth. How does this appear? Well, as a garden is taken out of the common ground to be appropriated to a particular use, so the Church of Christ is chosen from the rest of the world. In a garden, nothing that is good comes up naturally, but as it is planted and set; so nothing is good in our human nature, but what is put there by the Heavenly Husbandman. A garden stands always in need of weeding, and dressing; so it is with Christ's people, else their spiritual graces are in peril of being overgrown, and so becoming

useless. The training of the heart like the training of a garden is not the work of a single day, but a matter of constant vigilance; and in the soul, as in the garden, the blossom and the fruit repay the toil. A little attention bestowed in its season on the soul, and on the garden, is easier and much more effective than labour postponed until a later period.

Whenever possible, every one should own a garden. It has been said by a distinguished artist, that there is no charm more alluring than a well loved garden, and that such a garden does not happen; it grows out of the knowledge, the thought, and the love that some one puts into its creation. A garden is a creation of love, and a school to teach the thoughts of God. This was the view of Thomas Edward Brown, the Welsh poet, in the loveliest lyric on a garden written in our day. He calls it: "My Garden," and I think it will appeal to you, especially the closing line:—

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot:
The veriest-school
Of peace, and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign:
'Tis very sure; God walks in mine."

Yes, without question, the garden is a teacher and a good teacher of great moral and spiritual truths.

SHOWS DESIGN AND BEAUTY

Notice next that *a garden is a place in which we look for design and beauty on every side.* The measure of each to be found will depend on the resources of the owner. For instance, the hanging gardens of ancient Babylon—called one of the seven wonders of the world—were designed by one of the Assyrian Kings who married a woman he loved from a province, where her early life had been spent in fields and gardens. He brought her from her country home to the enclosure of the palace of Babylon, in which the Assyrian Kings lived; because she silently pined for the green places of her girlhood, and because he loved her, he made gardens for her not only within the palace, but upon terraces raised with earth, over the arched roofs and even upon the top of the highest tower: the most spacious, most pleasant, and most costly gardens, that have ever been heard of in the world; so that Babylon was, in reality, the first garden city known on earth. Nature is lavish of her gifts to those who will devote them to Nature's altruistic ends. So that a garden, in any age, demands plan, purpose, care and expression, on the part of its proprietor, if beauty is there to be found.

In the garden of my memory, this design was in evidence on every side, in the arrangement, and grouping of the various flowers and colours. As I reflect on this grouping of the colours, into which

the various parts of the garden were divided, I am inclined to think that there was more than a grain of truth, in the suggestion of an old scientist, who said that the annual succession of colours in flowers corresponds, on the whole, to that of the colours in the rainbow. Each walk had its own arrangement, design, and especial *colour*, which gave a distinction that was noteworthy to look on, and pleasant to recall. Amid the plethora of the flowers on every side, it is also pleasing to recall the beauty of the rose-garden, with its burnished globe-mirror in the centre, reflecting the house, the grounds, the sky, the fountain, the flowers, and those looking at it, and it seems to me as if every flower was an autograph from the finger of God.

It was the late Professor John Fiske who likened our Universe to a garden, and more particularly to a rose that is gradually unfolding itself in symmetry and beauty. So by a more personal simile, we might compare each individual to the development of a flower, in the great Conservatory or Garden of God.

By the Garden of God, we mean the soul of the believer, and in a wider sense the Christian Church. So to my mind it is evident that the Church is the Garden of God, in its design and beauty. The Church is the expression and development of the thought of God in the soul. St. Paul says: "We are God's workmanship," which literally means: "We are God's poems." As the flowers in their

beauty are the smiles of God's goodness, so His people are the expression of His love and grace.

It is wonderful to dwell on the thought of God's design to make His people beautiful, and the care He takes to accomplish His purpose. There is an old parable that may help to make this plain to us. It is the parable of the brier-bush that was found growing in a ditch, and which was discovered one day by a gardener, with his spade. As he dug around it, and lifted it out, the brier said to itself: "I wonder what he means? Does he know that I am only an old brier?" Then the gardener took it into his garden, and planted it amid his flowers, while the brier said: "What a mistake he has made in planting me in this lovely garden!" But the gardener came once more with his keen-edged knife, made a slit in the brier, and budded it with a rose, so that when the summer came lovely roses were blooming on that old brier-bush. Then the gardener as he looked at it one day, said: "Your beauty is not due to that which came out, but that which I decided to put into you."

This is a picture and a parable of what God is doing all the time with our poor, and unworthy lives. They often seem to be of little use, with no hope that they will ever be of use in this world. Then God in His gracious design takes them in hand. He pours His love upon us in and through Christ, lifts us out of the dust, and puts something of His own nature into our souls. Then we trace

not alone His gracious design, but in some measure we also manifest to others His beauty. A good prayer for all is "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"; the beauty of holiness, by which we show forth His praise in our lives or perhaps better at the moment: "Awake! O North wind; and come thou South: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

GIVES PROTECTION AND PEACE

Further, *The garden is a spot in which we seek for protection and for peace.* This is especially true of Oriental lands where the garden was in danger of being laid waste, by the wild boar of the woods, or being destroyed by the beasts of the field. Because of this danger, the Eastern garden is usually a protected place, so that its owner, and his friends may have quietude. A wall was erected, or a hedge planted around it, not for repression, but rather that every flower should have the fullest liberty to express itself, and that visitors might be undisturbed. Such a restraint makes for freedom, in order that the flowers may reach their best.

In my memory garden of Connecticut, this protection and peace were features that impressed me much. It is enclosed on every side, and yet not so absolutely closed that it is an impossibility to enter it by night or day; the beautiful faith of the Lady of the Flowers was such, that she could not and would not believe that any one would seek to injure

her garden, or take any undue advantage of her kindness. To the credit of the district let it be said that rarely has her confidence been abused, and on the one or two occasions that it has been abused, she will not allow that it was intentional. Her own peace of mind is reflected in every part of the garden and also in the Bird Sanctuary, on another part of the estate, where one has a sense of security, that is as rare as it is refreshing: a security that suggests to one, God's own perfect tranquility.

All this also suggests to us the protection and peace of the Church, as the Garden of God. I wonder do we think of this sufficiently? We all recognize the protection of the home, and how much this means for childhood, and youth, but let us not forget that God has given us also the protection of the Church. The Church guards us in our infancy by baptism, and all that it represents and implies. It guards us by spiritual fellowship, and by its constant opportunities of service. It protects us by its worship, nowhere more needed than in this our crowded city, where so many are liable to lose the vision of God. Just as you needed the home when you were children, so we need the ministrations of the Church until our last hour. The peace and joy of that tender guardianship is, that it checks nothing which is good and beautiful, but fosters all that has been planted there by Christ, thus helping us in the fulness of growth in the Garden of God.

REVEALS UNITY AND VARIETY

Again, a garden *is meant to give pleasure to its owner, and to all who may visit it, by its growth in unity, amid variety:* What a pleasure is afforded by a garden! What secrets the flowers can tell us! When we ask them the secret of their beauty, they tell us, that there is not a line of colour in any part, not an outline in any petal, not a curve in any leaf, that could be spared, or altered. Maeterlinck has a fascinating theory: he believes that the flowers possess not only variety, but intelligence, and it gives him constant pleasure to find the proofs of it from time to time. His idea is that the ox-eyed daisy is the dull boy of the flower-world, and the orchid the highest achievement. As an example of the intelligence of flowers may be instanced the case of a little plant, which for a long time looked quite stunted, and unhealthy. But suddenly, without any apparent reason, it blossomed out in the most extraordinary way. What had happened? When investigation was made, it was found that the plant had thrown out a feeler underneath its pot, and sent it over to an invalid plant, which was being tended, and doctored, by means of a particularly rich soil. In this astute way, the little plant absorbed the rich soil, from another, but which that other plant was unable to fully use. This certainly looks like intelligence, and would seem to bear out the view not only of Maeterlinck, but of Wordsworth, who said in the middle of the past century:

"It is my faith, that every flower,
Enjoys the air it breathes."

Be this as it may, the pleasure afforded by a garden is great, and my memory-garden in this respect, has many tender, and helpful associations. It gives real delight to its owner, and to the visitors who enjoy its beauty and its bounty; and who have the pleasure of seeing such unity amid variety. Think of the pleasure in watching the simplest flower unfold itself! consider the exquisite delight in marking the various stages in the development of a rose!

Little wonder that the rose, and all the flowers give such pleasure when we dwell on the mystery and the glory in their life.

So it is with the Christian Church. The Church as the Garden of God gives pleasure and refreshment to God, Himself. We are told by the Psalmist: "The Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with Salvation." Our lives should always be of such a character as to give pleasure and satisfaction to Christ. If your soul is truly the garden of the Lord, you will say, "Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."

The Church not alone gives pleasure to God, by its growth, but it may be compared to a garden in its variety. As the garden is planted with diverse sorts of flowers, and fruits, some being famed for their colour, others for their form, and still others

for their fragrance; so it is in the Church of Christ: they are all in the garden where they flourish side by side. In Tennyson's "Becket" the poet says: "Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers." A beautiful line, but all alike belong to Him. Let us not criticize our brethren who are not made precisely after our pattern, but rather take pleasure in the variety manifested, when planted by the same hand, and growing in the same garden. Let the life that God has given find its own expression. The lofty palm and the lowly pansy: the radiant rose, and the sweet mignonette; "the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together," all tend to make the Garden of God one of great variety; but underneath all this seeming divergence, and many differences, there is an underlying basis of unity amongst Christians everywhere.

IMPARTS PLENTIFUL FRAGRANCE

Finally, *The garden is a place which gives freely of its fragrance, far and near.* It is thus a type of the influence we may all exert in the Garden of God. You may remember how the good Bishop in Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables" said that his desires centred around two things: some stars in the sky, and some flowers on this earth. That was a happy combination, for the flowers have been called: "Stars of the earth."

> "Bright gems of earth in which perchance we see,
> What Eden was, what Paradise may be."

Nothing in the physical world is more mysterious than the fragrance of the flowers. It has baffled all attempts to define either its substance or its action: as for its cause, it is just as great a mystery as ever. And yet, the flowers give their fragrance with a profusion and prodigality, that is tireless, but with no apparent diminution of substance. How minute these particles of fragrance are may be gathered from the experiments of a famous French scientist, who calculated that it would take a hundred thousand years to bring about the loss of one milligram of musk, through the escape and exhalation of its perfume.

AWAKENS OLD MEMORIES

The fragrance of the flowers carries the mind back on all the previous years of our fleeting life. A thousand memories return to us unbidden. It is a sacred thing to re-live one's life from our first primrose gathering of childhood, to the joys of last summer, with its new perfumes awakening old memories, almost too sacred to mention. These old memories cover the meadows of the heart, and as we walk among them, a gentler, tenderer, and more receptive temper fills our whole being, and perchance fits us more fully for the remainder of life.

My own thoughts were illuminated and interpreted by a word from my companion, who said that to him, "this place seems like holy ground."

That unconscious remark made me think of one of my favourite passages in "The Mill on the Floss," by George Eliot, and which I shall now take the liberty of quoting in full. George Eliot is dealing with the associations of childhood, reflected in the life of later years. She says: "Life did change for Tom and Maggie, and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of those first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had no childhood in it; if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass; the same hips and haws in the hedgerows; the same redbreasts that we used to call 'God's birds,' because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony, where everything is known, and loved, simply because it is known." What a parable of our life in this world. It is a good old world, always arresting, and always interesting. The spell of the past is awakened by the perfume of the flowers, and the glamour of gold and green lying upon the world's breast in the new summer. One may almost dare to say, as he thinks of Shakespeare:

"Rosemary, pansies, hearts-ease, rue:
These are my garden flowers;
Memories, thoughts, and responses true:
These are my blossomed hours."

There is another thought suggested by the fragrance of the flowers, and that is the fragrance of a life that is planted in the Garden of God. The influence of such a life is immortal for good, in the church and in the world. Take a sprig of lavender and put it under a bell-glass. What is the result? It soon dies, killed by the poison of its own perfume; but release it, and it divides its fragrance with all in the room. So the selfish life, through living to itself, dies, while the life that serves gives a fragrant influence on every side. Such a life leaves the world brighter and better for having been in it.

NEEDS SUITABLE ATMOSPHERE

All life needs the atmosphere, and every garden needs the wind for the production of its flowers, and fruits, and fragrance. A Chinese proverb says: "There are no flowers without the wind, which scatters the seeds." The garden needs the cold keen winds from the North, to quicken the powers that lie dormant during winter, and then the soft South wind, with its gentle breath, that the flowers may unfold, and the fragrance go forth. Here, the North wind is prayed for to start the colours. This suggests the work of the Divine Spirit, in revealing our sin, and need. The poet also prays for the South wind to blow on his garden; the South wind to melt us into gratitude, praise and service to God.

In nature we cannot have both these winds blowing at once, yet in the realm of grace this is possible. Nature can do much for us. Standing in the heart of the country one does not wonder that Emerson says: "The happiest man is he who has learned from nature the lesson of worship." Yes, Nature is a great teacher, but Grace is even a greater one. How often have we watched the grace of God bring out of the blackest mind and life the sweetest flowers of love and pity and service, and made them roses in the Garden of the Lord.

It is said that in Holland the rose is sometimes cultivated by planting a rose of an ordinary type close to one of unusual beauty and fragrance. The common rose is carefully watched, and its anthers removed, so as to avoid its propagating its own species, the object of course being that it shall be pollenized by the superior variety of rose. Gradually the rose thus treated takes upon itself the characteristics of the nobler and sweeter life of its neighbour in the garden. It is a striking illustration of what happens when we permit ourselves to be planted in the garden of Jesus. Our lives receive the influence of His own Divine spirit. We become like Him. We lose the characteristics of the lower life to which we have been accustomed, and begin to show the nobler life of Him who is the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley.

In this gracious process, which may be experi-

enced by all who yield their hearts to Him, the Holy Spirit may at the same time work grief and gladness. Each of us may be conscious of this, through Christ, so that as we die to sin, we may live the fuller life of God. God does not open a flower with a crowbar, or a peal of thunder. He opens it as He opens most of our hearts, gently, even though there may have been some preparatory work: opens it as He brings in the joy of spring, and the riches of summer; and, in view of this let me invite you all to join in this prayer: "Awake! O North wind; and come thou South: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." In other words, you may say:

"Come sweet South Wind! and blow around my heart,
Open some flowers of grace to please my Lord:
Find there some fragrance, that may freshly start,
Some savour of true gratitude afford.

"Oh, Breath of God! breathe Thou around my life!
Nay, breathe within me: make my heart all fair.
Wake, strengthen, purify, give rest from strife,
Until He sees His own clear image there."

IV

THE SOUL'S UNION WITH CHRIST

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me."—JOHN XV: 4.

WHAT it was suggested this lovely parable to our Lord, we cannot say with precision. All we know is that it was the habit of His mind to go to the realm of nature for many of the royal principles and illustrations which reveal to us the mystery of the Divine life in the soul. But surely never was our Lord's teaching more simple, and yet at the same time, more truly profound than in this parable of the vine, and its branches. It is as Lord Tennyson once said: "Perfection beyond compare."

The vine—which in Western lands is half exotic—was one of the chief products of Palestine: it flourished along every hillside. Holy Scripture is full of references to the vine-dresser's craft, the fruit of the vineyard, and the vintage festival at the end of the season. Not infrequently in the Old Testament do we find the vine used as a representation of the Jewish Church. On many of the ancient Jewish coins we also find stamped a spray of vine-leaves, or a cluster of grapes as a kind of

national emblem of Israel, in much the same way that the rose is the emblem of England, the thistle of Scotland, the shamrock of Ireland, and the leek of gallant little Wales, the land of the mountain and the flood. When Herod the Great restored the Temple to more than its early splendour, he placed above its chief entrance the golden image of a vine. It is just possible that Jesus at this time may have passed from the upper room into the Temple Courts. As He looked up over the gateway, and observed the vine, the visible symbol of the ancient Church, He may have said: I am the true vine, the ideal vine, the vine which Israel claimed to be, but fell short of in experience. Or it may be that a real vine was seen fluttering in the night wind as our Lord passed from the upper room to the moonlit street, thus suggesting to Him this matchless parable. If this is so—and it seems to me most probable—it would indeed be a significant token of our Lord's calmness in view of His Passion and Death. In that trying hour He turned for the last time to the Book of Nature, opened its pages reverently, and used it for the purpose of teaching the most priceless truths that ever fell from His lips to the little band of His followers.

The great central truth that Jesus wished to unfold at this time, and to impress on the sensitive minds of His disciples, *was the reality of the Soul's union with Himself*. He pictures the nature of

this union in the imagery of the vine and its branches, and imagery which permits us to enter into the heart of God through the grace of Jesus Christ. Incidentally He also corrects two false conceptions of the Christian life, which if not remedied work havoc and ruin to the soul. One of these false conceptions is, that the Christian life is a hard, formal, and mechanical thing; while the other is that it is a careless, happy-go-lucky sort of thing, requiring no cultivation or care or culture. Both errors are corrected by the figure He employs, a figure which embodies all that is truest, and deepest, and sweetest, and strongest, in the Christian religion; which is the eternal religion for the life of man in a sin-stained world.

BASED ON EXPERIENCE

The Soul's union with Christ is not artificial, or arbitrary, but organic. It is a vital union, a union which includes the lowliest member of the Christian family. Because this union is vital, it is experimental, that is born of a personal experience. The late Bishop Moule defines it as "*Conscious Union,*" and such a view commends itself not only to the scholar, but to the saint. No external or temporary union will suffice: no work of man can effect it. The soul's union with Christ is the work of Christ Himself, in response to the venture of faith. Christ, and God in Christ, brings the believer into fellowship with the Heavenly Vine.

which means into harmony with the Redeemer's purpose.

Let us return to our Lord's figure, which reveals to us the secret of all vital religion. He says: "I am the vine; ye are the branches." How intimate! How precious! How vital. Personally, I am always helped in my study of this subject by recalling my experiences in boyhood, when I had the opportunity of seeing some notable vines. In several of these the pliant branches stretched scores of yards along the espaliers, and yet one life pervaded the whole from the root, through the stem, right away to the most distant leaf, and cluster of grapes. So one life passes from Christ to all who abide in Him by faith. "Abide in Me," He says; "and I in you." Each branch grows out of the vine-stock, and depends on it for all its supplies or nourishment; so says Christ: "Apart from Me, ye can do nothing." If there were tongues in trees, and such a branch could speak it might well whisper: "I live, yet not I, for the vine-stock liveth in me." Because the vine lives, the branches also live. Such a union is vital, continuous, and complete.

There is a quaint mediæval saying which brings home to us the practical side of this union in a striking way: "Matter and form make a body; body and soul make a man; a man and Christ make a Christian." A Christian is therefore one who is united to Christ by living faith: one who has the life of Christ transfused into His spiritual nature:

one whose heart beats in tune with the pulses of the Divine will and purpose. Christ's thoughts work in our thoughts; Christ's choice rules our wishes; while Christ's love and life constrains and colours all the actions of the common day. We are joined to Him, in a vital union of affection, devotion, and a heartfelt desire to do His will. The tender prayer of Whittier is one that we may all well offer to our Divine Lord:—

"Deep strike Thy roots, O Heavenly Vine,
Within our earthly sod:
Most human, and yet most Divine,
The Flower of man and God."

RESULTS IN FRUITFULNESS

The Soul's Union with Christ results in fruitfulness of Christian character. Fruitfulness follows union with Christ, as the shadow follows the sun, or as effect, its adequate cause. Indeed union with Christ is the secret of all fruitbearing in daily life. There may be plenty of activity, and yet barrenness of soul, because the soul lacks the life that follows union with its Lord.

It is at this part of our subject we touch the distinctive blessedness and glory of the Gospel, other systems approach us and tell us how we ought to live, but Christ imparts to us His life. There is a profound meaning in that mystical but precious passage in another part of John's writings where he says: "God hath given unto us Eternal Life, and

this life is in His Son." This life unfolds itself in beautiful character: character that is known as Christian. A copy to follow is all very good, but what is the use of giving a man a copy if he cannot copy it? Morality looks down on the lame man, the man crippled by sin, and says: "See here! this is the standard of conduct by which you ought to live, and walk." But Christianity bends over the cripple and says: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Christ gives more than a pattern; more than a standard; more than a motive; more than a law: He gives life. This life flows from union with Himself, and results in the virtues we possess.

At "Wordsworth's seat" near Lake Windermere there may be seen an illustration of this union and fruitfulness, which is very suggestive. Incredible though it may seem, an oak, an ash, and a holly tree are all growing out of a common stock of oak, and have become so interwoven in fibres as to be almost indistinguishable. What an illustration of the fruitfulness which follows abiding union with Christ!

The way to be fruitful is to abide in Christ rather than by efforts after individual acts of conformity to His will, however needful and precious these may be. There is something deeper than acts of obedience: it is to cultivate unbroken communion with Christ. Nine times in this parable do we find the term "Abide in Christ" in one form or an-

other, which shows the value of the central thought in our text. "Abide in Me:"—is not this what the sun is constantly saying to our little earth planet? The sun says: "Remain in the solar system: resist the temptation to fly off into space and I will abide in you, in the verdure of the vegetation, in the formation of thy rocks, and in the life of all living things." "Abide in me:"—is not this what the ocean says to the little cave which shows signs of separation from its mighty waves? The ocean says: "Keep thy channel open, and twice in every twenty-four hours I will pour of my fulness to your most distant shore, giving freshness to what otherwise would soon become foul." "Abide in me"—Is not this what the vine-stock says to the branches? The vine-stock says to the branch: "Continue in me, and I shall send to your utmost leaf, and cluster, my life so that you may have abundance of fruit in its season." And "Abide in me:"—is not this what Christ says to every one who is a genuine Christian? Christ says: "Abide in Me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." To abide in Christ is the lesson we all need to learn.

OPEN SECRET

This is the open secret of fruitfulness in the Christian life. It says to us: "Get more of Christ's life into the soul; and the speech and conduct will

soon become more Christ-like." Some good people cultivate individual graces at the expense of harmony and beauty, and balance in character. The true way to influence conduct is to influence the springs of conduct. To make a man's life better, the chief thing is to make the man better. The great way to do good is to be good, and the great way to be good is to join the life—by faith—with the good One God—in Christ. This is the Christian way: this is God's way: this is Christ's way, to first receive, and then out of the life that is hid with Christ in God, to give forth fruit to His praise and glory.

It is interesting to observe that there are four stages of fruit-bearing mentioned in this chapter. These are (1) fruit: (2) much fruit: (3) more fruit: (4) abiding fruit. There is a definite thought attached to each stage, as may be seen by studying verses IV, V, VIII and XVI respectively. Each verse is a window which permits the light of Christ to fall on the soul's pathway. The secret of fruitfulness is union with Christ. The secret of much fruit is communion with Christ. The secret of more fruit is the discipline of the husbandman. The secret of abiding fruit is, on the Divine side—His choice of us for service, and on the human side—our choice of Him, our friend, who by His friendship develops the soul's best life in fruitfulness. In other words, the abiding fruit springs on the negative side from the death of the

self-life; while on the positive side, it is merged into the life of Christ. As the branch bears fruit because it identifies itself with the tree, so the abundant and abiding fruitfulness of character follows identification with Christ. To an American citizen, his country's triumph is his triumph? His country's defeat is his defeat. So it is with the Christian: he rejoices when Christ is honoured; and he weeps when Christ is defamed. This is the secret of fruit-bearing that is permanent, and this profound truth finds a place in the programme of Christ, for every life.

PURPOSE OF PRUNING

The soul united with Christ needs the pruning of the Husbandman. In this parable the Father is represented as the Husbandman, but in other parts of the New Testament, Christ assumes this office Himself. It is wonderful how our Lord here refers to life's discipline, by the use of a single word—pruning: indeed it is the only kind of husbandry that finds recognition. And of all plants, none need the pruning knife so unsparingly as the vine, but with care and cultivation, it yields a rich reward. Indeed in the whole plant world there is not any plant or tree to be found so specially suited to be the image of man in relation to God, as the vine: none where the growth is so ready to run to wood, fit only for the rubbish heap or the fire. Nothing in the garden is so severely or so sedu-

lously pruned. So the Heavenly Husbandman prunes our lives after the same plan. Hopes and habits, as natural as the young vine shoots, are cut off and cast away, that the central life of our Lord may flow through us without being directed into worthless channels. Christ's pruning is not without purpose.

I wonder if any of you have ever been in a vineyard at the season for pruning the vines? Once I had such an opportunity, and it was truly a sight never to be forgotten. It seemed to me, at first sight, to be the most reckless and flagitious waste that I had ever witnessed. There was the vinedresser busy with his knife lopping off the bright green leaves, or incipient clusters, which were scattered on every side, while the bare stems and branches seemed bleeding at a hundred points from the sharp steel. But as I watched with a wonder, and a growing interest, it was soon evident that there was not a random stroke in it all. There was nothing cut away that it were not a loss to keep. So says Christ in this parable—pruning is needed *not to improve the life in the branches, but to improve the branches in which is the life.* The knife may be sharp, and the tendrils bleed, as the things that seem precious are taken away, but it is all done that the real force of our manhood may be flung into the production of fruit and God. And surely no stroke will be a stroke too heavy, or too deep, if it helps to this happy consummation.

It is related of the great and good Richard Cecil that once he fell into unusual dejection of mind and heart owing to the insults he had to endure, through having espoused the evangelical conception of Christianity, which he adorned in a piety that was both rare and refreshing in his day. Walking, one afternoon, in the Botanical Gardens at Oxford, his attention was drawn to a fine pomegranate tree, and he was surprised to find its stem cut almost through near the root. On asking the gardener the reason for such treatment the man replied: "Sir, the tree used to shoot so strong that it bore nothing but leaves, therefore I was obliged to serve it in this manner. Now that it is almost cut through, it begins to bear plenty of fruit." Richard Cecil, great soul that he was, went back to his room cheered and instructed, remembering the Saviour's words on the necessity for pruning the living branches of the True Vine.

God prunes, but never cuts off, a fruit-bearing branch. He acts like a great surgeon, taking away what is necessary to remove that He may give fruit, much fruit, more fruit, and abiding fruit: that He may—in a word—give fuller life. In a recent memorable address during the Passion Week Services in our city, Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, with great fervour, closed his message by exclaiming: "I would rather bleed before God's pruning hand than burn outside the pale of His grace." This noble philosophy of life is in line with the

deepest truths of Christianity, of which Dr. Cadman is such an able and eloquent exponent.

A similar philosophy of life has been given to the world by Mrs. Hamilton King, in her fine poem entitled: "The Disciples," a poem which is one of the most beautiful on the subject to be found in literature. She tells the story of the vine in detail; how it suffers beneath the pruning knife, and yields its best only to be despoiled by man. Such also is the history of Christ and His Church: always bearing fruit for the world, at the cost of suffering and sacrifice. Sacrifice is the law of Christ's Kingdom. A self-centered religion, whatever else it may be, is not the religion of Christ.

What is the application of this great subject to us all? It is at least two-fold. The first part of it is, that *apart from the vine-stock the branch can do nothing.* To the vine-stock it owes its life, its beauty, and its fruitfulness. So Christ says: "Without Me, ye can do nothing." All that Christ has, or is, He puts at our disposal. But the converse is equally true: *without the branch, the vine-stock can do nothing.* A vine without branches can bear no fruit. And such is the wonderful condescension of our Lord that just as His people are dependent on Him, so He is dependent on His people. Without His people—the branches of the living Vine, He cannot dispense His blessings to a needy world. Do you marvel at this? You need not marvel unduly, as it is His own appointment.

This is the high honour to which He has called you and me; an honour that carries with a responsibility that may well make the stoutest heart tremble in view of the teaching He has given us in this parable. Meditate on this truth until your soul bows in the presence of such a mystery, the mystery and meaning of the soul's union with Christ.

PARABLES OF LIFE

Let me enforce this application further by two parables drawn from real life. One of these refers to a young lad who while playing in his father's orchard noticed that one tree bore rich and ripe apples, with the exception of a single branch that was bare of fruit and withered. His attention was arrested by the sight, and so he inquired of the gardener the cause of the fruitless and withered branch, and was told to climb the tree and that he would soon, upon examination, find out. The lad soon followed the gardener's advice. When he reached the branch he noticed that some one had tied a piece of string tightly around it close to the trunk, thus stopping the flow of the sap to the branch, so that it withered, and bore no fruit.

It is sometimes like this branch with us. The soul that is separated from Christ withers, and is fruitless. By unkindness, by evil temper, by impure words, by unworthy deeds, we permit something which corresponds to this piece of string to shut off the flow of Christ's life and love into our

lives. All sin, at all times, shuts out the life and love of Christ.

The other parable refers to two vines, in the same glasshouse, which grew side by side. One bore abundant fruit, the other yielded none. They both had the same amount of care bestowed on them, the same amount of good soil, light, air, water, and nourishment, but no fruit was found on the one. And yet the leaves of this fruitless vine were green, flourishing, and healthy, but that only added to the disappointment of the gardener, who tended it with such care.

At last an expert vine-dresser was called in, and in a professional way he overhauled the whole vine. When he dug below the surface with his spade, he discovered the secret. In days long gone a careless gardener, in tending to the soil around the tree, had inserted his sharp spade into the main stem, and had almost severed it from the parent vine, but not quite: just enough remained united to allow sufficient sap to flow through to keep the leaves in good condition, *but not enough to bear fruit.*

What did the expert gardener do? Did he give up the vine as hopeless, and condemn it to be cut down as unworthy of a place in the greenhouse? This is what some expected, but the vine-dresser saw it in another light; not only what it was, but what it might become under his care. He resolved on healing the breach at all cost, and so from his pocket he drew his sharp knife, and very carefully,

very tenderly, and with an expert hand, he cut from the parent stem, far below the branch, a piece just big enough to fill the breach, and putting it in firmly, and bending it up, he took his departure. The result was all that could be desired. Today that vine is bearing abundance of fruit, each cluster being a silent testimony to the union that exists between itself and the parent vine.

What hope in this for all disappointed hearts and sorrowful lives! The breach between you and Christ must be healed, and often it is only by the use of the pruning knife that His life and yours can be bound together. But soon the season of discipline is lost in the joy that His life flows fully, freely, and without hindrance in the soul, thus producing abundant fruit.

Oh, thou whose life of Joy seems reft,
Of beauty shorn,
Whose aspirations lie in dust,
All bruised, and torn,—

Rejoice, though each desire, each dream,
Each hope of thine,
Shall fall and fade: it is the hand
Of Love divine—

That holds the knife that cuts and breaks
With tenderest touch,
That thou whose life has borne some fruit,
May now bear much.

V

THE CONQUEST OF ENVIRONMENT

"Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."—PSALM lxviii: 13.

THIS strange and picturesque text has been the cause of more discussion than perhaps any other single portion of Old Testament Scripture. Even the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in his "Treasury of David," calls it "a difficult nut to crack." What is the connection between lying among the pots and the wings of a dove? Why should a nation like Israel be likened to the plumage of a pigeon? And when was it possible to designate such plumage as either silver or gold, rather than a modest brown or humble grey? All these, and many other, questions have troubled succeeding generations of Bible scholars, even unto the present hour.

There are two or three ways of looking at this text, which may be briefly considered in opening up the subject. The first is, we may regard it as somehow removed from its proper surroundings, inasmuch as the context gives us no clue to its interpretation. We see this in Nature. Naturalists tell us that they sometimes discover a plant flour-

ishing in a soil and under skies that are alien to its order and habit. This child of tropical sunshine has found a sheltered spot in a valley in the Rocky Mountains, and raises its head among the sturdier growths, which brave the Northern winds. Some bird, or the currents of wind, or the ocean drift, or some traveller has unconsciously carried the seed, and what Ruskin once called "*Co-operating fate,*" has given it a congenial seed plot; so that it greets the eyes with a peculiar charm.

May it not be so that this passage, and a few others, have found a place to which they did not originally belong? Possibly so, but whether or no, we are thankful it is in the Bible. Its music, its beauty, and its poetry, appeal to us with power, and it is our duty to seek for its explanation.

The second view is to look upon it as a mistranslation. Many do so, and not a few Hebrew scholars have attempted other renderings, but the trouble is that these new attempts are all unsatisfactory. They make confusion worse confounded. From every point of view one prefers the text to remain as it is, with all its picturesque colour, and difficulty of exegesis.

The third view is to look on this passage from the standpoint of John Robinson—the pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers—who said: "God has yet more light to break forth from His Holy Word." In fact, new light is continually being thrown on the Bible, and this text which for centuries was re-

garded as utterly unintelligible is now seen to be one of unusual fullness and beauty of meaning, once we have had the key to its interpretation placed in our hand.

KEY TO PASSAGE

What is the key that invests this passage with significance? It has been placed at our disposal by a gifted Irish lady—Miss Whately—the daughter of a famous Archbishop of Dublin—in a volume entitled: "Life in Egypt." In this volume she tells us that the houses in Egypt, with their flat roofs, are generally in such a condition of litter that she was afraid the roofs would break down under the accumulation. Particularly did she observe the heaps of old pots, and pans, and pitchers of various kinds, piled up in some corner of the roof. During the heat of the day the doves were accustomed to hide themselves among these pots, and pans, in order to escape from the heat of the sun; but a little before sunset, they would suddenly emerge from behind the pitchers, and dart upwards through the air, flying in large circles. Seen *against* the light the pigeons *appeared*—although most of them white—to be turned into silver, while seen *under* the light, or directly overhead, the slanting rays of the setting sun painting them in colours of gold. It helped Miss Whately, as it helps us, to understand this passage: "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a

dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The meaning of the passage now becomes plain. It unfolds to us a precious promise of God, assuring us that a holy and unsoiled character may be maintained in this world, no matter how degrading the surroundings. From among the pots these beautiful doves would rise calm and unsullied to the heavens, their glistening wings as if burnished with silver, and their feathers covered with shining gold. Soiled surroundings, yet silver wings! What a study is here suggested in contrasted conditions of life and character!

The subject that leaps into view is—*The Conquest of Environment.* Could anything set it before us in clearer light than this picture? On the one hand we see the doves among the pots: on the other we see the doves on the wing. On one side is the soul's debasement, and degradation: on the other, the soul's ascent into the heavenly places. Such is the picture before us today, a vivid and impressive picture of the Conquest of Environment in human life.

BEGINS WITH ASPIRATION

The Conquest of Environment begins with aspiration. The doves knew that their real environment was not amongst the pots on the roof. They aspired by their instincts to higher ideals, and an ideal is a standing invitation to a higher style of life.

This means the upward look, for no man can rise above his surroundings until he aspires to do so. No nation can emerge from its national evils, until its attitude to these evils is changed.

The late George Frederick Watts, the famous artist—whose motto was, "The Utmost for the Highest"—has given the world a great national picture under the title of "Aspiration." It represents a young soldier with large frank eyes and long wavy hair, while his body is clothed from head to feet with bright steel armour. One hand is touching the hilt of the sword by his side; in the other he carries the standard of his country, while around his brow there appears a bright halo. Everything suggests *National Aspiration,* as he seeks to keep unsullied his country's flag.

Now it is national aspiration that is suggested by our text today. The primary reference is to the Hebrew people emerging from the blackness and bondage of Egypt, or from the weary years of captivity in Babylon, or possibly to both events. The latter is by far the more probable, inasmuch as the whole psalm from which the text is taken seems to be a song of thanksgiving for the ending of the Babylonian exile. The mighty conqueror Cyrus is knocking at the gates of the Empire, which for thirty odd years had held the Hebrews in bondage. Already his unconquerable armies are outside the walls of mighty Babylon, and with the fall of that

city the way is open for the aspirations of the captives to be realized, in the return of the Jews to their own land.

At this point the passage bursts into clearness and beauty. It tells us that out of the old Israel, servile, materialistic, and degraded, there shall be seen a new Israel, exalted, spiritual, and glorious.

Out of the dust and the debris of their degrading experiences the people of God shall rise clarified in vision, dignified in bearing, and beautiful in character. Out of the darkness and the shadow, and the humiliation, they shall aspire to return to freedom and prosperity, and national power, because the Eternal shall touch them with His splendour. In a word: "Though they had lain among the pots, yet they were to be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The obvious application of all this to America is evident on a moment's thought. We all cherish the hope that America, after having emerged from the Great War, will be yet transfigured by the ideals which inspired her during that conflict. There are three attitudes, any one of which we may assume towards our country today. One is the attitude of the *Stoic,* which means indifference through hardening the heart to all the higher ideals of life. The next is the attitude of the *Cynic,* which simply sneers, and snaps, and snarls, at everything which happens, and eventually produces bitterness of soul. There is the third attitude—the attitude of *Chris-*

tian aspiration, which believes in America, the real America, and longs to see it return to God. There is no easy way from earth to the stars: it is by aspiration, by struggle, by the Conquest of Environment. The soul of a nation must aspire, no less than the soul of the individual. The fine poem by J. G. Holland, entitled "Gradatim," sets this forth in a suggestive fashion:

> "I count that thing to be grandly true,
> That a noble deed is a step toward God.
> Lifting the soul from the common clod,
> To a purer air, and a broader view."

ELEVATION OF CHARACTER

The Conquest of Environment not only means aspiration in national affairs, but elevation in personal life and character. This elevation of character is vividly represented by our text. The doves followed aspiration with elevation; the upward look led to the upward flight. Miss Whately makes a striking allusion to this in her book. She says of the doves: "It was beautiful to see them rise clean and unsoiled, as doves always do, from the dust and the dirt in which they had been hidden, and *soaring aloft* in the sky, until nearly lost out of sight by the bright sunlit clouds." What a picture and parable of the soul's elevation to the heavenly places in Christ Jesus! The contrasted conditions in personal life and character have never been more finely set forth.

May I ask is it a very far cry from all this to the life that many are living today? Perhaps, indeed, you recognize in it a parable of your own experience in the world. There are many rubbish heaps which we are all more or less compelled to go amongst, and we have no option but to face them; while the broken pitchers and vessels are not far fetched symbols of the daily reality of the city and its streets. Many find their lot cast among the dust and the grime of the pots, but the conquest of environment may become so real an experience that they need not be soiled by this contact. Out of such conditions they may soar unsullied on the wings of faith and love; out of their surroundings they may rise to an elevation of character that is best described by doves in their seeking the skies, while "the light that never was on land or sea" glorifies them in their flight. The fact is, no honest business need begrime the soul. The machinist, the mechanic, the artisan, and the laborer, may all have grimy work to perform, but by the conquest of environment each may be like a dove in the personal elevation of character and life. There are men today in our coal mines with souls like the wings of a dove, as there are men in mansions with souls as black with sin as the miner's is with coal dust. As some one has said, "The one has soot on his face, the other has it on his soul." No legitimate calling need be sordid, or degrading, but if we are sordid, every-

thing we touch and handle will also become low and degraded.

WEARINESS AND WINGS

The pity is that life for so many is a life among the pots. In a recent issue of the *Journal of Mental Hygiene* there appeared a letter written to the editor by a woman reader. She said, "I wish I could find a place where they don't want things. I have heard there is such a place in some Southern State, and I believe I will try to find it and go there to live. This forever being called on to supply some want in the household tires me out, and I'm weary all the time."

What a pathetic confession! Weariness, without wings! And the almost tragic side of the subject is, many men and women, like the writer, would say, "We feel that way too." What do all such workers need? They need wings. They need to stand over their own work. They need to find joy in service. They need to conquer their environment by the elevation of the soul, so that the things of the world may be left behind.

How can this be done? It can be done in one of two ways, or perhaps both.

The first way is by *detachment of spirit,* which is an important lesson to learn in the art of living. In the midst of the political raving excitement of the French Revolution, and all its effects in Europe, there were at least three people who, while not un-

moved by it, were able to detach themselves from it when they pleased. These were Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Wordsworth's sister Dorothy. They were all young, but they had learned the art of detachment of mind, by elevation of spirit, and all through that trying time they grew in strength and beauty of character.

The other method is by *dwelling in the spirit of thankfulness on past mercies.* I read not long ago of a woman who all her married life had kept a diary, only writing down the pleasant things which came to her day by day; the sad and the painful ones she tried to forget. Each year, after middle life, she wrote a book of the blessings which came to her life, and called the volumes, "My Pleasure Books." When she became wearied and depressed —as we all are at times—she conquered her environment, and drove away dull care by getting out her books and reading from them. The result was that her soul, like the doves, rose above the things of the world. By detachment of mind and dwelling on life's blessings, we may find true elevation of life and character.

This means that the wings of the soul are turned towards the sun, which alas! is not always true of them in life. And yet it is the great glory of man that each day there comes to him the opportunity of rising from the low and sordid, by the wings of the mind. You may remember the bitter memories of his mother Charles Dickens had, who left him

as a boy to struggle in the squalid environment of East London, and the Lower Thames. In later life once speaking to a friend of those early years, he said, "There was nothing in those days but my dreams, to keep me from growing up a little vagabond of the streets." Nothing except his dreams! But they were sufficient, for by means of them he mastered his environment, while his experiences were turned to good account in the elevation of the personal and national character of England.

A gifted lady once was asked to write her greatest desire in the birthday book of a friend. She complied, and this is what she wrote, "That life for me may never lose its halo." She wanted that little touch of the mystical and romantic expressed in the old lyric, "Over the hills and far away." There are tides from the infinite which flow in on souls that aspire, souls that seek elevation, souls that are prepared to conquer their environment, by the power of the life of God.

Everyone is familiar with the old song, "O had I the wings of a dove!" But wings are not given to fly away with so much as to fly upwards. There are many things in life which keep the soul in its upward flight, as we have seen, such as detachment, and art, and literature; but the greatest of all is faith, and prayer to God. If there is no touch in your life at this moment, no compelling force that elevates your life, is it not that you have forgotten that God gave you wings?

The sun is calling you from your dark corner: the free air is inviting you to plunge into it, so that you may find your true home. The great living Christ is waiting to touch your plumage with His glory, for He says to you and to me, "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with gold."

THE LAW OF THE LEAP

In the conquest of our environment we have the thought of transfiguration. Note the gradation of thought in our text to this helpful glorious climax: —aspiration; elevation; transformation; but the greatest of all is transformation.

How does this transformation take place? Let us turn to our text for the answer. It was the glory of the sunset, and not anything of their own which gave these poor birds the beauty that both Psalmist and traveller observed; so the Christ of God, the sun of the soul, is central and vital in our lives, if they are to be transfigured as they should. Christ, the Light of the World, transforms our lives, not because He is an ethical teacher; not because He is a pioneer of thought; not because He is a pattern of holiness, but because He is the personal Redeemer from the power and the love of sin.

By what law do we conquer our environment, and become transformed into Sons of God? We may answer in the words of St. Paul, by "The law

of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death." Transformation means freedom; it means what scientists call *the law of the leap.* There are illustrations of this law on every side. When a certain temperature is reached ice passes into water, and water into steam. Suddenly the caterpillar passes into the chrysalis and even more quickly the chrysalis into the butterfly. Even the scientific world is approaching the assurance that new species are suddenly formed, and do not always come about by long, slow changes of environment. In his recent message on the mutation theory, De Vires startled the whole scientific world by saying that new species are formed by sudden mutations, by spurts, or leaps, or bounds, the cause of the appearance of which is as yet entirely unknown.

In the moral and spiritual world we see illustrations of this law all the time. Take one illustration from the realm of literature. In many ways the most remarkable religious poem of the nineteenth century was, "The Hound of Heaven," by Francis Thompson. But only a few years before he wrote that poem, Francis Thompson was an outcast, a waif, a wanderer, a casual labourer on the streets of London. He tried the profession of bootblack and failed. When he slept it was on the Thames embankment, and finally, clad in rags, he held the heads of horses, making a few pence daily, which he spent on opium as fast as he got them. But

Francis Thompson could not get away from God. Christ came to reveal God to him, and to transform his wasted life, spent in folly and degradation up to that hour. That is how we conquer our environment through Christ. This is what Christ came to earth for, not that we should be conformed to the world, but "transformed, by the renewing of the mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

TURN TO THE LIGHT

To be thus transformed by God, we need to turn toward the light. There is a charming little book written by the late William Frederick Palmer, the well known American war correspondent, entitled, "With Our Faces Toward the Light." It was written in the early days of the war, before America entered the conflict. How did Mr. Palmer get his title? Well, one glorious evening in the early days of the war, when the sky was still luminous with the setting sun, he came upon a battalion of British soldiers resting amid the debris on the Somme, and looking happy and contented in their tasks. Mr. Palmer asked the commanding officer why they looked so happy. The reply was very significant, "They have their faces turned towards the light." The British officer then went on to say that the "day would come when America would also turn her face towards the light, and join the allies in their task." He explained more fully by

adding, "The thing which we are about to attack tomorrow will drive you into it, for the thing that is sending us to the attack is calling you." And so, with faces towards the light, those brave men seemed to be transfigured by the glory of a great cause, as they reflected the glory of the Western Sun. They might lie amid the pots and pans, in dug-outs, or trenches, in shell holes, or in any other rude shelter, but Frederick Palmer felt that nothing could sully the standard of righteousness for which they struggled.

As we look back now at that scene and in imagination see them transformed by the glory of their cause, we also see another transformation that is still better. It is the transformation of character that comes by looking at the Leader of all good causes; the Captain and Commander of our salvation, the Christ of God, who gave His life a sacrifice for man in his environment of sin. As we look to Him by faith, His Spirit whispers peace to the soul; and as we continue looking to Him those wonderful words of the great apostle of the Gentiles are realized, "For we all with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed (metamorphosed) into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

VI

THE MINISTRY OF JOY

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."
—NEHEMIAH viii: 10.

THERE is always a close connection between Christian joy and Christian strength. Indeed, given the first, the second is sure to follow. This aspect of life is too frequently forgotten or overlooked. We are all anxious in these days to possess the strong soul, the soul that overflows with radiant life to those within the circle of its influence. Such souls around us are doing a great and noble work for God; a work in its effect more far-reaching than the most sanguine among us can believe. We long to fathom the mystery, and wistfully ask the secret of their strength, that we may make our own lives sublime. To all who make this inquiry, good old Nehemiah furnishes in our text a full and satisfactory reply, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Christian strength is inseparable from the experience of Christian joy.

The occasion of Nehemiah's first uttering the words of our text was one of unusual interest. It was a great anniversary following a period of gloom. After the lapse of 150 years the people

assembled to hear the public proclamation of the promises made by God to their fathers. Little wonder, as Ezra the scribe read from the law, that amid such sacred associations the people wept aloud, but their sorrow was soon turned into joy. Nehemiah, one of the greatest optimists of any age, turned the thoughts of the congregation from the past to consider the present and the future. He said to them: "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

NEED OF JOY

There is great need for a new ministry of joy at the present hour. Pessimism has taken hold of not a few in regard to the Church and its work. It has been said with truth that the pessimist is a man who of two evils chooses both; in other words, he blows out the light of the candle to see how dark it is. At times we are all to blame for a tendency in this direction. We not only take our pleasures sadly, but we even allow our religion to become joyless. This is one reason why many people fight shy of our churches today. They are bored by our formality and weakened by our joylessness. They want freshness, uplift, inspiration, but receive only dullness, drabness, and monotony. Dr. Frank Crane was more than half right when he said re-

cently that notwithstanding the imposing ceremonies and rigid decencies of the Church, the trouble with the Church is—it is lacking in joy. Now what a holiday is to our jaded nerves Christ's religion ought to be to the joyless soul, relief, emancipation, and the breaking away from the routine of the commonplace. One has recently said if he were asked to give a new beatitude to the world it would be: "Blessed are the joy-bringers, for theirs is the benediction of God," and he might have added with equal truth that all such joy-bringers also receive the benediction of men. We can win and wear this benediction only when "The joy of the Lord is our strength."

DIVINE IN ITS SOURCE

The ministry of joy is a ministry that is divine in its source. It is "the joy of the Lord." Let us put two or three kindred thoughts together, that we may understand the force and inwardness of the passage. When we say "the perfume of the rose," what do we mean? We mean the rich fragrance that emanates from the rose. When we say "the light of the sun," we mean the bright, strong cheery ways which have their source in the sun. When we say "the water of the Catskill mountains," we mean the water whose springs are found in the famous Catskills. In each instance the idea is that of a causative source. So when we

speak of "the joy of the Lord" we mean the joy that has its springs in God; the joy that is divine in its source. Now this differentiates it from two things with which it is frequently confounded—mirth and happiness. Mirth is a mere act of the personality, but joy is the habit of the soul. Mirth is brief and passing, but joy is permanent. Mirth is instinctive, like the lambs that frolic in the fields; but joy is spiritual and flows from our faith in God. It was probably with some such distinction as this in his mind that a great modern preacher said he was going to teach his people to love God and laugh. The difference between joy and mirth, is in a word, that joy is deeper because its source is divine.

Then joy is also to be distinguished from happiness, although the words are often confounded. This difference is expressed in the words themselves, and to get at the root idea of each will help us. Happiness is, therefore, according to the original meaning of the term, that which comes to one by haphazard or some outward circumstances of life. But joy literally means, a leap or spring from within. It is the bliss not of condition but of character. The soul is in such sweet harmony with the great Over-Soul of the universe—God—that there is a constant well-spring of spiritual bliss. God is its source, and Christ its center, while the light that radiates from within can brighten the darkest night of obscurity, adversity, and sorrow. Within re-

cent years I met with a vivid illustration of this distinction while visiting a man in one of our hospitals, who was about to undergo an operation of a very serious character. The pain he suffered both before and after was intense, for he was highly strung. One day, he told me, with tears of joy filling his eyes, that while he had no happiness in his hours of pain and weakness, yet God had given him not merely peace, but overflowing joy. Such a testimony enables us to see that the highest joy may have pain latent in it. The old hymn is true to our deepest experiences:—

"I thank Thee more, that all our joy
Is touched with pain:
That shadows fall on brightest hours
That thorns remain:
That so earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain."

II

The ministry of joy is not only divine in its source—it is also a ministry of strength and vitality. All joy has something to do with efficiency. There is a potency in it that cannot be gainsaid. It is man's prerogative that his force comes from his mind rather than his body. Indeed, cheerfulness doubles the power of personality. Gloom cogs the wheels, but gladness oils the axles, so that the chariot moves forward without friction. The old song is true, that the sad heart tires with a mile,

but the glad heart can trudge on. It is the difference between joy-life and duty-life.

MUSIC OF ORPHEUS

The strength of Christian joy may be seen in at least two directions. One is, it becomes our strength to resist temptation. The joy of the Lord is the strength of the Lord, which lifts the soul into a large and wealthy place. Quite true, temptation is often subtle and bewitching, but in the presence of the joy of the Lord temptation loses its power. Have you ever heard of the old legend concerning the quest of the golden fleece? When the sailors on the good ship Argo were on search for the golden fleece, they had to pass the isle of the sirens, who by their ravishing music sought to lure them to the shores of the fatal isle and destroy them. But there was one on board named Orpheus, the father of song, and the sweetest singer on earth at that period of history. He tuned his harp, and sang the songs of the heroes of old, and as he sang the strains were so sweet and ennobling that all on board turned away from the seductions of the sirens on the fatal isle. They had more joy in listening to the music of Orpheus than to the strains of the sirens. So if we only possess the joy of the Lord as our strength and inspiration, we shall turn from the pleasures of sin, to the nobler life in Christ.

Further, the joy of the Lord is our strength for

Christian service. Nothing else will suffice to sustain us in our work for God. For strength there must be hope, gladness, the joy of the Lord. If the arm is to smite with vigour it must be at the bidding of the cheerful soul. Where this joy is lacking there is a deficiency in the depth of our faith, arising from a defective view of our position in Christ. It is only when we have much faith that there is much love, and only when we have much love can we have strength in our Christian service which flows from joy. If there be but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, little wonder that the mercury marks a low degree, and if there be but small faith, or a defective view of our inheritance in Christ, there can be only low vitality and little joy in our service. It is not an easy matter to carry on Christian work apart from this joy. True, the sense of duty may carry us far for a time, but there is a higher stage and a loftier motive power which is ours when the joy of the Lord is our strength.

MINISTRY ALL MAY SHARE

Further, this ministry of joy is a ministry in which all the members of the Christian Church may share. Christ's religion is as the song of the nightingale, and the nightingale does not sing to a time table: it sings because it must express its own music, even though, when the song is ended, it fall against the thorn and die. Christ's religion is as a

draught of cool water from a wayside spring, and not from a water bottle in a railway waiting room, with its contents unchanged for a week or two in the middle of summer. Christ's religion is as a royal procession that climbs the hills of God in sight of the crystal sea. Such a religion as this will save us from falling into a groove, for a groove means a grave in the Christian life. God's beauty should make us buoyant; God's sympathy should make us social; God's charity should make us cheerful; God's love should make us light-hearted; and God's grace should make us glad with a gladness like the joy of Jesus. This great ministry of gladness is one in which we all may share, when the joy of the Lord has become our strength.

May I ask, is this joy of the Lord our portion? The best recipe for sadness in the Christian life is: be a half-hearted follower of Christ. If believers in Christ would only remember that they are as morally bound to be cheerful as to be honest, they would cease to unload their nasty moods and unpleasant humours on the heads of harmless and inoffensive people.

There are some Christians who have the gift of finding joy everywhere and leaving it as a priceless legacy wherever they go. Such a man was Charles Kingsley. Never did any minister live a more devoted Christian life, and never did any one manifest more of the joy of the Lord in his ministry.

He once said to his wife, "I wonder is there any home in England where there is more joy than in our own?" And yet it was Kingsley who said, "I simply cannot live without Christ."

THE JOY OF HARVEST

God wants us to share in the joy of harvest? It is the joy of fellowship, the joy of achievement, the joy of realized hopes. It is the joy of the Alpine climber, who has scaled Mount Blanc, or the mighty Matterhorn, and beholds a panorama of beauty beyond what language can describe. It is the joy of the student who has scorned delights and lived laborious days when he sees that his name stands high in the honour list, and duly receives recognition for his arduous toil. It is the joy of the painter when he beholds his dream transferred to canvas, which in after ages will delight and bless the world. It is the joy of the poet, to whom "a timely utterance gives the soul relief" as he sees his vision embodied in lines that will thrill humanity in years to come. It is the joy of the man of letters, when he has completed the last page of the book, written with his own heart's blood. It is the joy of the statesman when he has succeeded in placing on the statute book of his country some great and beneficent measure of reform which has cost him sleepless nights and toilsome days. It is the joy of the minister when he beholds the fields he has sown white unto harvest, and feels that

something worth while has been accomplished in co-operation with the members of his church. It is a strategic blunder for a minister, who is sour and morose, to blame his congregation for not supporting him in a more loyal fashion. Each and all should do something to banish gloom and weakness from personal and church life, and share in this ministry of joy. If truly Christians, we owe it to Christ as an ethical, moral, and religious duty to be cheerful. Christ did not say "ye are the clouds of the world." He said "ye are the light of the world." And our light is to so shine—the light of our Christian influence, Christian example, and Christian gladness—that others seeing our good works may be led to glorify our Father in heaven.

Someone at this point may say with great truth, "My emotions of joy and sorrow are not under my own control. I cannot help being glad or sad as circumstances may dictate." Well, I will tell you what we all can do, or refrain from doing. We can all either stand in the sunlight or stand in the shadow. Each one can determine the complexion of his Christian life. By your own act you can inject into the veins of your moral nature either the bright tints of gladness or the dark tints of sadness. This is true, even making all necessary allowance for the different varieties of temperament manifested among your fellow men.

The last prayer of the late R. L. Stevenson was

a prayer for cheerfulness, offered to God on the day before his lamented death in the presence of his immediate circle of friends, at family worship, in his Samoan home.

"The day returns and brings with it the petty round of irritating concerns. Help us to play the man. Help us to perform our duties with laughter and kind faces. Let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business each day, and bring us to our resting place weary but undishonoured, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep."

May this gladness be your's and mine, because the joy of the Lord is our strength today and forever.

VII

THE ETERNAL REFUGE

"The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms."—DEUTERONOMY XXXIII: 27.

THIS immortal saying was the swan-song of Moses, and is one of the loftiest utterances of Hebrew literature. It was originally given by Moses to the ancient people of God, in order to comfort them on the eve of his departure.

As he starts from the camp on his long, last journey to the crest of Pisgah, we hear him saying to the people: "You are not so homeless as you think; YOU STILL have a shelter and a friend. THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." With these great words on His lips He passes from the companionship of earth to the more august society of God.

The subject here set forth is the Soul's Eternal Refuge, for doubtless Moses whispered the words to his own soul as well as to the people. Singular to say, our text is rarely preached from, probably because it is so much richer than anything one can say concerning it.

Though centuries have passed away and generations come and gone, the sublime music of this passage weaves a spell around the spirit that never

loses its power of appeal. It finds us and expresses for us what we desire should find expression in our deeper moods of experience—THE SOUL'S ETERNAL REFUGE IN GOD.

REFUGE FROM MYSTERY

The Eternal God is thy refuge from the insoluble mysteries of life. We cannot escape from life's mysteries; they grow with the growth of knowledge, and were never greater than today. The late Heinrich Heine, the brilliant German poet, in a striking lyric, calls attention to the riddle of life. He pictures a youth standing on the seashore, calling to the winds, waves, clouds and stars to solve for him the mystery of life, and tell him what there is underneath the universe. When he has called, and called again, and got no reply, the poet says that only a fool will expect an answer to such a riddle.

Well, whether men be fools or not, they have always been asking the question, "What is there underneath all the things we see?" Two answers have come to us from antiquity—one mythological and the other religious and spiritual. As samples of the old mythological answer, we have the well-known Hindu legend, that directly under the world is an elephant, and underneath the elephant a huge tortoise; while the old Greek legend is that underneath the universe is a strong man called Atlas, who carries it on his shoulders. In

this way, mythology would read the riddle of our world.

On the other hand, coming down from the same ancient world, we have this startling and sublime conception, that the eternal God is man's refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. This implies that underneath there is an EVERLASTING HEART OF LOVE, and since arms are the symbol of power, we see how God's embracing arms are the emblems of LOVE AND POWER COMBINED, thus all-enfolding and all-embracing the little life of man.

Because of this, the problem of a quiet mind in the presence of life's mysteries resolves itself into the question: What is your real conception of God? Have you ever tried to think yourself into God? Bacon, the father of inductive philosophy, was right when he pointed out that there must be Infinite Mind, antecedent to all phenomena, and that no following of sequences can find a final explanation without having recourse to God, even though that equivalent of God be but Herbert Spencer's conception of "an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed," it is, and ever must be a necessity to all real thought. Bergson's "tendency behind phenomena" is not enough to rest in, inasmuch as tendency is only a quality.

So in our brief transit across the stage of time, from eternity to eternity, from God to God, amid life's insoluble mysteries and inexorable laws, there falls on the ears of the soul these simple

but sublime strains of music: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

REFUGE FROM ILLUSIONS

Again: The Eternal God is thy refuge from all life's illusions and adverse conditions. As a rule youth knows little of these illusions and adverse conditions—little by way of comparison. Few, however, reach half the allotted span of life without feeling that their experience is graphically portrayed in Scripture: "VANITY OF VANITY, SAITH THE PREACHER, ALL IS VANITY." That outburst came from the heart of the one who knew life at all points of the compass and found illusion, disappointment and weariness not only a commonplace but a reality.

Now God has at least two ways of leading men through the gates of illusion. The first is by refusing our desires in order to show us that we are not in accordance with His will, while the second is by granting our desires and at the same time sending *leanness into our souls.*

Now which of the two produces the most bitter experiences of the soul, that of the man who yearns in vain for the supposed good things of life, but who sees them flit over his head like the clouds across the distant hills; or that of the man who, attaining the end on which he had set his heart, finds that his success yields him no happiness, but

like an apple of Sodom, turns to dust and ashes to his taste.

Thus men labour for wealth and find that they were happier in poverty; and seek fame in freedom from adverse conditions, only to find fame less tolerable than their previous obscurity.

There is, however, yet another way by which God leads men and women through illusion and weariness in the complex conditions of modern life. It is by bringing home to the soul this old message: "THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." It is well to remember this today amid our social and political troubles, not forgetting the troubles of the Church of God itself. We greatly err if we imagine that our plans and purposes are upholding the world; they are not, but rather the mighty arms of God are upholding it.

Our refuge in times of distress is not in parliaments, governments, congresses, senates and compromising politicians, but in the eternal God.

THE COMFORT OF A PERFECT TRUST

The same principle is true in personal life.

It is possible to realize God's refuge and enfolding arms under the most adverse conditions and circumstances. An heroic lady missionary recently published a little volume entitled "A Life for God in India," in which she tells how this truth came home to her when in the hot season the Hindu wed-

ding ceremonies, with their interminable hubbub, had tried her almost past endurance. Her courage at length failed as a certain procession passed her door. The drumming all seemed to be on the top of her head, and she felt that it was *impossible* to endure days of it. Something seemed to say to her, "You must get away from here."

Then came the suggestion, "Do not go away from here; THESE ARE GOD'S CIRCUMSTANCES."

Her faith turned Godward through Christ, when in upon her soul was borne the message, "THE ETERNAL GOD IS THE REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." She did then, she says, what she should have done at first—she let go her fear of adverse conditions and just rested in the everlasting arms.

REFUGE FROM LIMITATIONS

Further: The eternal God is thy refuge from all human limitations and the sense of insignificance. These two are usually linked together in life. All down the ages the limitations of human nature have tried to hold the Church and the world back from progress. Men through obscurantism have threatened, unchurched and excommunicated the thinkers who have been in advance of their time. When Savonarola had brought all Florence to its knees before God the Pope's Legate approached the splendid reformer and saint, saying: "I cut thee off from the Church militant and the Church tri-

umphant." The brave martyr replied, "From the Church militant you may, but from the Church triumphant, never."

Savonarola appealed to the Supreme Court above, a Court in which, thank God, human limitations have no *locus standi*. He appealed from the despotism of authority to deep, unfathomable love of the Infinite Mind and Heart. His thought would have been, and must have been, "THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." "What matters it though the Council of Florence condemn me to the flames? The flames can only destroy my body, but my real self will be unharmed."

And what applies to our human limitations is equally true of our sense of insignificance The other day I noticed in the papers with regret that Khama, the great and good Bechuana chief, had passed away. The account of his death brought back to my mind vividly his visit to Britain, in order to plead the cause of his people. When he returned to his own country, having his petition granted and the demon of drink restricted within his dominion, he tried to tell his people something of what he had seen of the splendour of London and of his interview with the great queen-mother, the late Queen Victoria. In the course of his address to these simple people of primitive life he paused and said: "I have no words, you have no words, to express what I have seen. Our country

is small compared to the bigness of the British Empire, but I will have to think of words before I can make you understand the greatness of the mighty England, in whose arms we rest."

Now, Bechuanaland, lying in the arms of the British Empire, is a figure of your life and mine, so small and insignificant, lying in the arms of God. Remember if the arms of God be around us, then He Himself is near.

GOD EVERYWHERE

The eternal God is thy refuge from the sense of sin and of loneliness. It may be the guilt of past sin, or the power of present sin, or the shadow of sin's former pollution; God in Christ is thy Refuge from all. It was to undo sin's burden that the eternal God sent the eternal Son. You and I have voluntarily yielded to sin, and so given an advantage to the powers of evil, but even so we may fly to Christ for succor, and so prove that the eternal God is our refuge from sin's pollution and power. The surest and safest refuge for all sinners is in Christ. "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sin is covered."

Donald Hankey in one immortal chapter gives us a glimpse of war experience, possibly his own, which takes us right into the heart of things. He introduces us to a soldier, wounded on the field of battle. He has been unconscious for an hour or so, but when he woke after the struggle he had a sense

of unspeakable isolation and loneliness, as if he had been cast on some desert island. Eternity and infinity seemed to him to be pitiless. The stars looked down on him coldly, which only made him feel more lonely still. Yet, after all, he had one advantage over the stars; he could feel pain and suffering, for he had only to move to verify that. At last he was aware of his existence, and his sense of solitude became oppressive. Softly he whispered, "God! God everywhere!" Then into his tired brain there came a new phrase, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." He sighed contentedly as a tired child; all his sense of loneliness disappeared, while the phrase went on repeating itself in his brain as a kind of a chant: "Underneath are the everlasting arms." The moon went down behind the horizon and darkness set in, but they fetched him back to the ambulance station at last.

"He will never again," said Donald Hankey, "be sound of limb, but there is in his *memory* and in his *heart* that which may make him a *staunch fighter* on other fields. He had learned a new way of prayer, and the courage that is born of faith well founded."

Such an experience was surely worth all it cost.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

There is little need to add that the eternal God will be thy refuge in that great adventure, when we pass from this life unto His immediate presence.

Then, every mask of hypocrisy shall be at last torn away; then we shall see ourselves as we are seen of God.

In his last days on earth, James Russell Lowell used to say: "I find great comfort in God." So may all who truly turn to Him through the cross of Christ.

When that knightly soul, Charles Kingsley, lay dying in one room, and his wife so dangerously ill in another that she was not expected to recover—their first separation in a married life of unclouded love and confidence—she sent him a message one day to ask if he considered it cowardly for her to tremble before the mystery of the unknown world. He sent back the reply: "Not cowardly; but remember, it is *not darkness* we are going to, for GOD IS LIGHT; *not loneliness,* for CHRIST IS WITH US."

Some years ago there passed from earth one of my dearest friends, and one whose unselfish life could ill be spared. Shortly before the end, the clergyman who stood by his side asked him: "Have you any fear of death?" His reply was: "Why should I fear, when beneath me are the everlasting arms?" He knew that the eternal refuge would not fail.

The eternal God is thy *refuge,* from the *sense* of *sin,* the *sense* of *loneliness* and the *fear* of the *change* we call *death.* May I ask you to join with me in saying:

> *"Other refuge have I none,*
> *Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."*

VIII

DON'T WORRY

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

—PSALM XXXVII: 1.

THIS precept of the Psalmist is directed against the sin of worry. It is one of the most prevalent and pernicious sins of modern life, and it is never out of place to dwell on it, in the average congregation, whether in the city or in the rural parts. Indeed, the man who can provide a remedy against worry is nothing less than a benefactor to the race. Ministers are sometimes affected by its as well as their people, and it always does them more harm than hard work.

And yet, if ever fretfulness were justified, it were surely justified under the circumstances portrayed in this psalm. What is the situation depicted? It is one where evil doers were moving about, clothed in purple and fine linen every day. It was a period in the Psalmist's history when workers of iniquity were climbing into positions of great power, and tyrannizing it over their less fortunate brethren. It was a time when sinful men and women were stalking and strutting through the land, basking in the great prosperity of ill-gotten

gains. The sight of it affected the Psalmist very much: his spirit was perturbed, and he was in grave peril of giving way to fretfulness. It was at this time there came to him the message of God: "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers; neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

THE ETHICS OF WORRY

What is meant by this precept: "Fret not thyself"? The meaning is: "Worry not thyself." In other words: "Don't get unduly excited, or heated, but keep yourself cool!" Even in a good cause, worry does not help but hinders. It is no help to the train for the axles to get hot. I was looking at a train recently, while waiting at a junction for my own, a train whose axles had got hot, and the heat delayed this train for hours. So that the best contribution that the axles can make to the progress of the train is to keep cool, and avoid all friction. Now fretfulness is just the heating of the axles: it is heat in the wrong place. And it is surely not without significance that this word "fret" is closely allied to the word friction. It indicates that something is wrong in the machinery of life: that there is an absence of that Divine grace, which when in evidence makes the wheels of life move smoothly.

The subject suggested may be designated: *Don't Worry.* It is a very practical one, and yet, how rarely has anyone the courage and the kindness to

speak directly to another on the theme. The opinion was freely expressed the other day by a young lady who had been long exasperated, and worn out by the brooding fears of a relative, when she said that in her judgment the sin of giving way to worry was as bad as giving way to the sin of swearing! The ethics of worry is a difficult and delicate question, but I am inclined to agree with the view of this girl. At any rate, all will agree with the late Henry Ward Beecher when he said that "it makes a great difference to a man's comfort, and general health, whether he dandles his worries and sorrows on his knees or spanks them and puts them to bed." The latter is the proper course to pursue.

Who does not know the unhappy experience of starting out on what might be a pleasant holiday, were it not for the beloved worrier? This person is always expressing dread lest the boat goes down, or the cars collide, or that you are sitting in a draught, or that a thunderstorm is going to strike the party. Between the blue sky, the dashing waves, the perfume of flowers, and the vision of glorious distances, the little underwail will obtrude itself, a veritable drop of gall, in the honey of all the pleasures of life. And the worst of it all is that the worrier always supposes that this fretfulness is the proof sign of peculiar devotion. It is actually offered as an evidence of affection, and many have to accept it as such, although they know well that the coin is counterfeit; for though true

love may be anxious, it never worries; it may feel, but it never frets.

THE DOGS OF WORRY

Let us not be too severe on the man or woman who gives way to worry. Into our own lives worry finds its way, and it is of interest to know that at the bottom of the word "worry" is the idea of chase and capture. A gloomy writer once said: "I am hunted by hounds in the night season." Such dogs are the dogs not of war, but of worry, and when once they fix their fangs in you, it is not an easy task to shake them off.

Sometimes we are pursued by worry in other forms. When Florence Nightingale was on her way to the Crimea, she tells us that she heard from the sailors a weird story about birds with black wings and blue breasts, that flew across the Black Sea during stormy weather, and which sometimes perched on the masts, but had never been caught. On dark nights they went to the Mohammedan graveyards, roosted on the boughs of cypress trees, and mingled their doleful notes with the sighing of the winds. The Moslems declared that the spirits of the wicked dead dwelt in these birds, and that their plaintive notes were the wailings of the lost. Be that as it may into the most of our lives there come at times birds with black wings, and blue breasts. We are heavy-hearted, and have the blues, a state of mind which Shakespeare would

describe as "the dumps so dull and heavy." And the strange thing is that some people never seem so happy as when they are miserable! They love to look on the dark side of things: they prefer to gaze at the cloud, not at the rainbow. They peer into the darkness, not up at the stars, and generally the eye sees what it brings.

Dr. Frank Crane, the well known writer, in one of his volumes of essays, tells us of such a person known to him in his boyhood. She lived in a cottage at the back of his home, a large thick woman, who enjoyed several incurable maladies. According to Dr. Crane, her "presence was a funeral." She ate food only to have it disagree with her, and breathed only for the purpose of irritating her bronchial tubes. She expected to die every night she went to bed, but may be living still for all Dr. Crane knows. She belonged to the church of which his father was the minister, but only assimilated such portions of religion as had to do with the "Day of Wrath, and the sudden and terrible judgments of God." The author suggests a fitting epitaph for all such persons who make life a burden to themselves and others would be the words: "What's the Use?"

CAUSES OF WORRY

What are the causes of this worry? They are manifold, and at this stage of our subject let us consider a few of them. Before doing so, how-

ever, it is essential to draw a distinction between worry and anxiety. Well-grounded anxiety is not worry. Worry means evil in anticipation, and a tendency to magnify present troubles and annoyances. It means to exaggerate trifles as light as air into things that are of great weight, and importance. The most usual cause of worry is undue forecasting and solicitude for the future. Of course there ought to be some reasonable provision for the future, if we can at all make it: provision for the needs of old age, and for those dependent on us, but worry cannot do so. When we do our best we need not fret over it. The late Bishop Creighton, of London, once said to his wife, a few years after his appointment: "Bishop Temple occupied the See of London until he was seventy-eight: how can I face twenty years more of this work?" He was crossing the stream before he came to it: he died at fifty-three, that critical year for so many prominent ministers in all the churches. Many of us will doubtless be free from care long before seventy-eight, or even fifty-three, so that it is good advice to take short views of life.

Some people are constitutionally disposed to worry. It is almost as natural for them to fret as it is to have fair hair. When that is the case, we must not be too hard on the offender, nor must the offender be too hard on himself. Thomas Carlyle was one of this type. When he lived in London he had a neighbour who possessed an interesting

coop of chickens whose male member disturbed Carlyle's slumbers by his loud crowing. He expostulated with the owner of the fowl, but the owner replied that there ought not to be any complaint, as "the rooster crew but three or four times during the night." Carlyle said in reply: "That may be, but if you only knew what I suffer waiting for him to crow!" This incident throws light on the constitutional tendency of Carlyle to worry, and also explains to us his attitude to his wife under certain circumstances. On one occasion he was at work in the attic, while Mrs. Carlyle sat a few yards away, busy with her knitting. Carlyle snapped out: "Jane—stop that knitting: the click of the needles dissipates my powers of concentration." His wife meekly obeyed, when in a few minutes Carlyle called out again: "Jane—your breathing disturbs me, as I can hear you draw every breath: better go down stairs." At this stage his wife withdrew in silence. Genius is no joke, especially when allied with a nervous temperament like that possessed by Carlyle. It was not that he did not love his wife, and prize her companionship, for she also had genius, second only to his own, and after her death there is scarcely anything more pathetic in modern literature than his mourning for her. Carlyle was like Bishop Creighton—given to worry, and in both cases it arose in large measure from natural or constitutional disposition.

On the other hand, just as no man would con-

tinue to bear any mark of physical deformity—if it were possible to have it removed—so neither should any man tamely submit to a mental or moral defect because he has a natural tendency in that direction. Rather should he manifest that true concern which seeks to keep him back with bit and bridle from making himself a boor to his dearest friends. No man, who has a spark of manhood, would submit to be controlled by kleptomania, which I suppose is really a disease with some people. Why then should he submit to the folly of fretfulness, even though it be something which has come to him by inheritance?

REACTION AFTER WORK

Sometimes worry arises from physical weariness, after the strain of prolonged work. There is no doubt whatever but that worry is produced by shattered nerves, and overwrought brains, which have consumed all the surplus nervous energy. This not infrequently follows brain workers, after a period of prolonged toil, mingled with trouble: it is the reaction after prolonged strain. A few years ago a brilliant young London journalist waited on a physician in his city, suffering from general depression, and fretfulness, and exhaustion. After a careful examination the kindly doctor said to him: "there is really nothing organically wrong with you except worry from overwork. If you were my son I'd start you tonight for the South Seas, and

failing that, to some outlandish village; and I'd stop all your allowances if I heard you were doing anything but laugh and idle around for the next month or two. A little bit of judicious loafing is all you want to make you as well as ever." He took the doctor's suggestion, and returned in a month or two perfectly restored.

The man who gives way to worry can never be his best. In the middle years of the past century a young fellow entered for a medical examination on which he thought his future depended. He had overworked himself, and became nervous, in worrying over his possible failure. Sure enough he did fail, and failed miserably, but he had the good sense to pull himself together after a little respite and say: "Never mind; what is the next thing to be done?" And he turned to the next thing with all his might, but ever taking good care of his physical health. Long years afterwards, when he had become on of the great scientists of the age, Huxley looked back upon this first defeat as one of the best lessons he ever learned. Writing of it he said: "It does not matter how many tumbles you have in life, so long as you do not get dirty when you tumble. It is only the people who have to stop and be washed who must lose the race."

Huxley was right, and frequently I have felt these words to be a veritable tonic. There is no real failure for a man except he fall into impurity and wrong. Some apparent defeats, owing to de-

fective health, are in reality glorious triumphs. If we have to tumble, let us tumble in a clean way. If we have to suffer temporary defeat in the race of life, let us ever keep our garments white.

MORBID IMAGINATION

Sometimes worry arises from an over-heated or morbid imagination. Perhaps you are disposed to question this view, but I think on a moment's consideration we shall see that it is sober truth. As a general rule worry is more frequently produced by what is feared than by what is actually suffered: by what the imagination borrows from the future, rather than by what the mind and body endures at the present hour.

In proof of this let me remind you of the experiences of an American gentleman, whose summer home is among the mountains, but who for a long time had a dread of the sudden storms of the holiday season. In looking back over his many vacations the thing that impressed him most about the summer storms is, that every storm that really materialized in his district, there were at least ten or a dozen that came within the horizon, made their threats in a menacing fashion, and then vanished away into air, without ever having touched his mountain. It is very much like that in life. A great many of the useless worries of life are from the storms that never come. Some people have great foresight for these storms that they can see

in the future, but which are mainly in the heated or morbid imagination of those who dwell unduly on this particular side of life.

There is a story told of a lady who for a time kept a list of impending troubles: it was a real relief to her to see them down in black and white. Some months later, in looking over the list, she was surprised to find the nine-tenths of them had only been in her imagination. These troubles that never come form the heaviest part of our load. The actual sorrows when they come have their comfort and cure, but what cure can there be for the troubles that never come? They are only haunting phantoms, unsubstantial as mist, and lighter than the air. Little wonder that Shakespeare said: "Each substance of grief hath twenty shadows, which show like grief itself, but are not so." In another part of his writings—the Drama of Hamlet—he also says: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." That immortal line shows us that Shakespeare has really touched the heights and depths of all philosophies. Of course, it is not literally true: there are some things always bad in themselves, and others good, but there is more truth in it than most of us are aware, and the truth in it accounts for our trying to cross the bridge before we come to it.

There is a little poem which may help to fasten the truth of this part of our subject in our minds, if I quote one verse of it. Here it is:—

"There is many a sorrow and pain, I know
As we tread the path of life;
There is many a grief of lasting woe,
And the way is toil and strife:
But the hardest load we have to bear,
Is the labour and strength that's lost
In building the bridge, with toilsome care,
O'er the stream that is never crossed."

CHIEF CAUSE OF WORRY

Perhaps the main cause of worry is the spirit of envy which the Pslamist refers to in the latter part of our text. It is not put here as an irrelevance, but as a prolific reason for the spirit of fretfulness.

Now envy is akin to covetousness, but there is a difference. Covetousness is for property: envy is of persons. Covetousness is the wish to possess: envy is the wish to dispossess. Covetousness is the desire to win: Envy is the desire that another should lose. But my brother, my sister, if you cannot go to the top of the tree yourself, don't try to shake your neighbour down, and then fret if you fail. How rarely do we meet a man or woman who really rejoices in another's advancement! Envy is one of the common and crying sins of our time, and few have grace enough to be ashamed of it.

The Psalmist's temptation here was to envy the prosperity of the wicked. This led him, as we have seen, to fretfulness, and the peril of fretfulness is great when looked at from this particular point of view. It springs from the spirit of envy, and envy in the days of Dante was regarded as one of the

seven deadly sins. To this day it remains as one of the most loathsome and hateful heads of the great hydra of selfishness. Few sins cause more misery to the sinner himself, and hardly any sin is so essentially base and contemptible. It is a slow gnawing pain, a secret misery at the sight of another's good. You grudge him his happiness. You cannot bear to see him more successful or more richly blessed than you are. You impeach Providence for permitting anything so palpably unfair. The man whom you envy has done you no wrong; he may be unconscious of your existence. But you cannot bear to see him so far in front. You are galled, and chaffed, and become irritable, and fretful, until worry works its course, in hardening, and embittering your whole nature.

CURE FOR WORRY

What, then, is the cure for worry? Well! we are not left in doubt. The Psalmist gives us a two-fold prescription, that always produces true tranquility. This open secret is revealed in the context, where we read: "Trust in the Lord and do good." "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him"; such is the antidote prescribed, and it has never been known to fail.

Take the first direction: "*Trust in the Lord, and do good.*" In this formula we have set before us what ought to be our attitude to both the unknown and the known. It calls us to faith in God, and in

these days of religious confusion and questioning it is a great thing to get back to a confession of faith such as this one is. It is the secret of true tranquility, and covers everything essential in religion. The great problem before each of us is not to resolve all the riddles of the universe, but to live simply and bravely our own lives. For this we need assurance, and it is found here: "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Then "fear not, faint not, fret, not: God knows, God cares, God loves."

The closing direction is: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This completes the cure. The meaning of the phrase: "Rest in the Lord," is literally: "Be careless in the Lord": and I remember seeing, some time ago, a perfect illustration of its meaning. I was playing a game of garden croquet with the older members of my host's family, and we were finishing the game as he came in through the gate, and caught up in his arms his youngest daughter, a bright little girl of three or four years of age. In mock seriousness he said to her: "Shall I throw you over the wall?" Her reply was: "If you like, father." She was perfectly careless in her father's arms, for her father did not like to hurt her, but the confidence of that little child suggested this subject to my mind so vividly that, as Wordsworth once said of his poetry: "A timely utterance gives the soul relief": hence my message today.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

What is your attitude to this life that is careless in God? Are you saying to yourself: "Such an experience is beyond me"? You are mistaken in this view, and the sooner you discover your error the better will it be for you, and your family, your business, your church, and the world.

Some years ago a man who had passed through unusual tribulation in his home and business affairs went to an eminent physician for advice. He was far from well, and the doctor gave him a most minute examination. "Now," said the specialist, after he had diagnosed his condition, "there is only one medicine that will benefit you. It is not expensive, but it is of the utmost importance that you should take it regularly. There is no necessity for me to write out the prescription. It is simply this: "Don't worry!"

Simply this! The specialist had set his patient the hardest task of his life. However, he paid his fee, went home, and determined to give the prescription a trial. He was a sensible man, and fully recognized the fact, which was sustained by psychology, that every time he turned his mind in the direction of certain things, over which he had no control, his system began to manufacture a virulent poison. The result was that he worked out a plain, common sense philosophy of life, and when his thoughts turned in the direction of attempting to solve problems which his reason told him were be-

yond his finite mind, or when his thoughts would turn towards his old trouble, he repeated to himself over and over again: "This is God's world, not mine!" The result was all that could be desired. As Professor William James once put it: "The sovereign balm for worry is religion."

From all this it is clear that we fashion our own life by our thought, our faith, our religion. Worry brings weakness into life, but real religion binds the soul to God, and so brings strength. Worry, if allowed to work unchecked, will destroy our faith, and disturb our poise of character. There is an old Japanese parable which tells of a man who was cruelly tortured by a demon. The man felt that he had never done anything to merit such punishment, and so he called on the demon to explain to him why he was so persistent in persecution? The demon replied: "Thou thyself hast created and fashioned me to be such as I am. Blame none but thyself for thy sufferings." So do we fashion from our own life the demons of fear, and envy, and worry, which torture us: and so frequently wreck our happiness. Only faith in the ever present, but unseen, Father through Christ, can give us the confidence that will conquer worry, and the calm abiding conviction that this world is God's world. Then:

> "Never you worry, never you fret;
> God is not done with our old world yet."

IX

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."
—PSALM XC: 17.

THE relation between beauty and religion is very intimate, and has scarcely received sufficient attention. There are many reasons to account for this condition of things. Perhaps the heritage of our Puritan ancestry is the most potent and subtle to be reckoned with, still, all the more so because we are so frequently unconscious of its sway. Our Puritan forefathers had scant respect for the relation of beauty to religion, and looking back to those stirring times we can sympathize with their motives, without being influenced by their arguments. To them the ministry of beauty was a snare that had to be put aside with other besetments.

And yet the ministry of beauty finds recognition in the Word of God. Quite true, the term itself is rarely found in either the Old Testament or New Testament Scriptures. On the other hand in Greek literature the word meets you continually. The Greeks were emphatically the people of beauty among the earlier civilizations. They embodied it in their various forms of art,—in poetry, in elo-

quence, in painting and architecture, in dress, and language, while their sculpture is still the wonder of the world.

In striking contrast to all this, the Hebrews can scarcely be said to have had any art at all; at any rate, they never attained the rank of an artistic race, such as the ancient Greeks, or the modern Japanese. This fact has led to countless discussions on the comparative influence on the world of Greece and Israel. It is a fascinating subject, and capable of more than one interpretation. But this at least may be said, that there is nothing more characteristic of the difference between the two nations, than their conceptions of sin, of holiness and of beauty. To the Greek, his sins were simply shortcomings, or literally "bad shots." On the other hand, the Hebrew with his frailties was haunted by the sense of sin, and of his responsibility to a holy God. The Greek worshipped beauty. The fragments of her temples still remain to prove it, while her statues still illumine and adorn the world. As for the Hebrew, he also had an idea of beauty, but a totally different one to that of the Greek. Indeed, if it were not found in the Bible, it would be called daring and perilous in its originality. That idea finds expression in our text today under a two-fold proposition, which has been stated by Dr. James Stalker with unusual force. The first part of it is that "God is the beautiful God"—the next follows as a se-

quence, viz., that "the Divine beauty may be imparted to man." Both these views find expression in our text today. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"; so that the relation between beauty and religion is recognized by the Word of God.

GOD—THE SOURCE OF ALL BEAUTY

The ministry of beauty finds expression not only in the Word of God but also in the World of Nature. It is seen in the sunrise, and in the sunset; in the starlight, and the rainbow; in the luminous organs of the fire-fly, and the majestic movements of the eagle and the swan; in the tints of the wayside flower, and the lustre of the curious shell. The old word of Scripture is true: "God hath made everything beautiful in its time." By means of this beauty man is helped to realize his relationship to God, and the highest life. This was unconsciously revealed recently by a lady to her minister, who said to him: "I was a Christian once for two weeks. It was while I was in the Yosemite. There my heart was continually crying out: 'The Lord is in His holy temple.'" The beauty of her surroundings had helped her to realize her relationship to the Eternal Beauty. Well might Thomas Curtis Clark say in his little gem of a poem entitled, "Apocalypse":

> There's enough of God
> In the heart of a rose,

In the smile of a child,
In the dewy blossom of dawn,
To prove
That Beauty is the Soul of Him,
That Love is His Sceptre,
And that all things created by Him
Face not the night,
But an eternal morning.

From all this it is evident that God is the source of all beauty wherever found. "From Him, all things sweet derive their sweetness; all things fair, their beauty; all things bright, their splendour; and all things that live their life." On the face of heaven and earth the Divine handiwork may be seen in a thousand forms. From whence does it all come? It is ever flowing out of the depths of the Divine Nature, where is hidden the reservoir of all loveliness. The only way to really enjoy this great and beautiful world is to see it as an expression of the Thought of God. Indeed every line of beauty is an expression of the Divine Mind.

The evidence of this truth has sometimes been startling. For instance, early in the past century a designer for a calico printer sketched a pattern which became exceedingly popular. Dresses bearing that design were worn by the ladies of the day. One afternoon Hugh Miller, the geologist, was searching the rocks for some fossils, alighted on one which he split open and polished. When the stone-picture came out his keen eyes saw that the calico printer had been anticipated. Once more it

became manifest that the design was not new, but old, traced by the original Worker—God, who sits on the Throne of the Universe. The mark of Greece is modern. I doubt if it is possible to draw any design that is not already existing in some natural form of beauty.

To define beauty aright is impossible. It is too subtle, too illusive, to imprison within a definition. Shakespeare reminds us of this difficulty when he says that:

> "Beauty's princely majesty
> Is such, it confounds the tongue."

The greatest painters have failed to trace its delicate lines, and form; indeed every attempt to reproduce it on canvas only serves to illustrate Lord Bacon's remark that: "The best part of beauty is that which a picture cannot express." It would seem to be impossible to define beauty as to paint the likeness of a human soul. But while beauty cannot be defined, it may be *divined,* and better still *desired so intensely* that sooner or later it bursts into expression.

This is especially true of the beauty set before us in our text today. Do you ask what is the beauty here desired? Why should the Psalmist pray for it to descend upon him? The answer is that the beauty here prayed for is the beauty of holiness, and that the writer felt his need of this gift. Amongst the ancient Greeks, beauty was

supposed to be the gift of the gods to their own peculiar favourites, which accounted for these favourites possessing the charm of healthy youth; but our God is not a God of caprice; He is no respecter of persons, so that all may look for His choicest gifts. It is this fact that encourages us to expect from Him the beauty of holiness as we present to Him the prayer of this passage: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"; the beauty of a life that is fair in the eyes of God, because His spirit has transformed our deformity and sin.

BEAUTY IN WORSHIP

The beauty of holiness should find expression in our worship. In a kindred passage we are told to "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," a command needed to be remembered by us all. Beauty kindles adoration. When the soul is aroused and quickened it sees—as did the Psalmist—that everything within it is beautiful and sings His praise. Fiona Macleod, that strange genius of duplex personality and mystical outlook on life, but with a soul ever sensitive to the loveliness of this old world, has said that beauty "is the most unforgettable thing in the world, and though of it a few perish and the myriad die unknowing and uncaring, yet beneath it the nations of men move as beneath their pilgrim star. Therefore, he who adds to the beauty of the world is of the sons of God."

Side by side with Fiona Macleod may be placed the fine saying of Hooker: "God hath nowhere in His world revealed that He loves to dwell on earth in ugliness."

The Eden implanted hunger for beauty should have a larger recognition in the worship of the Sanctuary. We do not plead so much for the worship of beauty as to enjoy and express the beauty of holiness in worship. All nature proclaims this truth, but how lightly we regard it. One of our living poets has called attention to it anew, in a stately lyric, in which she sings the beauty of creation:

Thine is the loveliness of every rose,
And Thine the velvet on the white moth's wings;
Thine is the scented foam the sea wind blows,
And Thine the April song the robin sings;

Scarcely we heed the beauty Thou hast made—
Beauty of stars that set the night with gold;
Beauty intangible of sun and shade—
These are the wonder gifts we lightly hold.

The reason why we hold the beautiful wonder-gifts of God so lightly is because of our irreverence of thought and deafness of soul. The peaceful pipings of the birds, the musical whispers of the breeze, the thunder of the rushing cataract, and the voice of the mighty deep all strike a responsive chord in the truly devout soul. But when we approach God, the All Beautiful and All Good,

in the Sanctuary, there is often lacking not merely good taste, but that reverence and awe of spirit that best befit us as we bow before Him in worship. It is the spirit that counts in all real worship: and a beautiful spirit will seek if possible to express itself in beautiful forms. Personally, I would rather be a Covenanter and worship God on the bleak hillsides of Scotland than present to Him a worship amid gorgeous ritual that was not sincere and from the heart. All true worship is not so much elaborate ritual as the surrender of ourselves without reserve to the Sovereign of our lives. There can be no beauty of holiness in worship without reverence, reality, and brotherly love.

BEAUTY IN WORK

The beauty of holiness should also find expression in our work. When the mind is renewed, and the heart cleansed, every common duty becomes as the steps of a new Jacob's Ladder, so that "Earth is crammed with heaven, and every common bush aflame with God."

The meaning of this is that, into the day's toil there is to be put loving and untiring service. Everything we touch and handle, whether behind the counter, in the office, no less than in the pulpit, is to be done in the spirit of devotion and submission to God.

Some time ago a Welsh pastor received into the

membership of his church, a shoemaker, on confession of faith, to whom the pastor said when extending the right hand of fellowship: "Take care, John, that you wax your threads more carefully, that you draw your seams more closely, and that your work be done more to the glory of that Master to whom you now dedicate your life." That is the beauty of holiness in daily work, and there is ample scope for its expression. It was Charles Kingsley who said: "Beauty is a wayside Sacrament, God's handwriting. Welcome it in every fair face, fair sky, and fair flower, and thank Him for it, who is the Author of all loveliness." We can scarcely wonder that in Kingsley's last hour on earth he was overheard saying several times, "How beautiful is God."

Since the days of Kingsley no man has proclaimed the absolute value of the beauty of holiness in common life, with greater power of philosophic argument than the Dean of London, Dean Inge. Dean Inge has had the courage to think this subject out for himself, and declares he has found the values of life that are worth while in Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, which he considers are one. No breath from the class rooms where Einstein's theories are being studied can shake the faith of Dean Inge in these verities. His spirit of the Universe is absolute Beauty, absolute Truth, and absolute Goodness. In view of this belief he considers that the new type of Christianity will be more

Christian than the old, because it will be more beautiful, more ethical, and more moral. He has been called a Neo-Platonist, which is true, but he is something more. He is a type and representative of those who are learning the value of the new currency in religion, and are prepared to look on the universe as a thought of God. This does not prohibit him from ascending into communion with the Universal Spirit, whispering the name of Jesus. By the presence and power in his soul of the All Beautiful, the All True, and the All Good, he addresses the Infinite Being as Father.

Consider how this ministry of beauty in work makes for the moral improvement of man. It appeals to his best by providing the only pleasure which is perhaps wholly unselfish. The love of beauty, when it is pure, is free from the desire of possession, in the sense of ownership. It is gratified by observation and enjoyment. A man does not desire to possess a glorious sunset, or a fairy rainbow in the midst of Niagara, or a flower shop; he just drinks in the beauty, and is helped to be a better man. I heard of a merchant recently who, though one of the busiest men in a big city, yet finds time, after a hurried luncheon, to look into a picture gallery or flower shop, or in some other way to get a touch of the beautiful into his crowded day. His argument is, and it is surely valid, that as he dreads becoming a mere machine, fit only for grinding out office work, he feels the necessity of

keeping his finer faculties alive and sensitive if he is to be a really good workman. Just as his face needs daily bathing in fresh water, so his spirit needs this daily bath in the realm of the beautiful, amid the toil of his working hours. Which things are an allegory, and more than an allegory. We should not neglect the ministry of beauty in our every day life. There are some people whom I have known and they became so utilitarian in their every movement that they would not walk a dozen yards out of their beaten daily path to and from business, even to see the most glorious sunset, or sunrise, thus confessing that the sunrise glories had faded from their shrivelled souls. They would not take time in the rush of life to examine a beautiful picture. They would not turn aside from the ugly and narrow thoroughfare to walk among the green grass and budding trees, on which the insect life of early summer furnishes a study in the works of God. It was once said of Leigh Hunt that if he had caught sight of a golden guinea lying on the grass and rushed to it thinking that it was a butterfly, he was the only man alive who would have been disappointed to find it was only a guinea. Most of us would have reconciled ourselves to the situation with more equanimity. Yet man does not live by the material alone. As we watch in the summer season the day's farewell to the evening in the glory of the sunset—what do we see?

We see the Artist change His tone
Till the brighter tints have softer grown;
And as we gaze on the picture fair,
We see the Hand of the Master there.

BEAUTY IN CHARACTER

The ministry of beauty should find expression in personal character. Indeed it must enter into character if it is to worthily express itself in worship and in work. In the religious life, as in all life, there is a fitness of things, but alas! incongruity is often the order of the day, and this incongruity arises from all kinds of false conceptions of God, and the Christian religion.

There is a delightful story told of Lyman Beecher's young wife, who, when taken by her husband to a somewhat inaccessible parish in New England, and finding the manse bare and uninviting, started at once to make it beautiful and attractive as possible. From her wedding gifts she brought forth some unbleached muslin, which she tacked over the floor of the living room and then upon a soft neutral background she painted pink roses with long sprays of green leaves. It was an altogether worthy piece of work for one who was to be the Mother of Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, both artists of the first water. But when her husband's poor parishioners came to see her they refused to cross the doorstep lest they might walk on the lovely flowers. Of course they were all proud of the achievement of their min-

ister's bride, but they were greatly troubled in their consciences at what they considered her daring. What was their trouble? Their trouble was that they did not think that she could have the little touch of beauty in her home and heaven as well. They said to her: "Do you think you can have this and heaven, too," Let us not blame them unduly. Perhaps a more profitable occupation would be to turn our thoughts in the direction of our own personal life and ask: "Am I, by an unworthy character, playing traitor to the beauty of holiness?" There is not only a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, but there is a beautiful and unbeautiful way as well, and often the unbeautiful is so unfitting that it suggests deterioration of character, through some lack of moral sensibility.

For example—who would sew a width of sackcloth in front of a royal robe of silk? Who would erect a stye in the chancel of some splendid cathedral? Who would offer withered flowers to an ardent lover or a dear friend? It is enough to say of such things that they are unfitting, unbecoming, out of place. And yet nowhere should the fitness of things be more manifest than in the behaviour of Christian character. Perfect taste, perfect balance, and perfect beauty are to be cultivated as the ideal to approximate, so that life may be rendered harmonious with the spirit of the Gospel.

As we have decided to take to our hearts a Gos-

pel full of heavenly charms, let us mark out from our conduct everything that is not in keeping with it. Remove the harsh line from the poem. Cut away the mouldy berry from the grapes. It is a great thing to keep the ideal of the Gospel high. The late Dr. Joseph Parker asks, "Do we admire the Gospel, and are we touched by its beauty, yet living in some secret sin?" How does the great preacher stigmatize such a course of conduct? He says such conduct is "High thought, and low life: head of gold and feet of clay: the morning vow broken by the evening's sin and shame." How true is this, but how unbecoming! How lacking in the personal character we should manifest!

It is a fact that a person may be upset for a whole day by the harsh way in which you may call him in the morning, or you may give him a beautiful start by the cordiality of your greeting. There is an old proverb which says, "He who makes goodness disagreeable commits high treason against virtue." It was a gracious Quaker lady who, when asked what gave her such a beautiful complexion, and to suggest the cosmetique she used, to some of her younger friends, quietly replied: "I use for the lips, truth: for the voice, prayer: for the eyes, pity: for the hands, charity: for the figure, uprighteousness: and for the heart, love." In other words, the beauty of holiness had found expression in her personal character.

The characteristics of the Gospel should be more

taken to heart by all. To be cheerless, when the Gospel is so cheery: to be slow, and mean, when the Gospel is so forward, and generous: to be unbeautiful, and deformed, when the Gospel is so lovely: how unfitting in all those who owe everything to Christ, and His Gospel of Grace. The Gospel reproves, while it saves. It saves by lifting what is good in character to what is better, and what is better to what is best.

BEAUTY THAT LASTS

The beauty of holiness is the only beauty that is permanent. Beautiful flowers will fade: sweet music will cease: the fair faces we have loved are taken from us and laid away in the grave. But the beauty of holiness will live on and on forever; it is the beauty of the redeemed within the veil. Socrates must have had a glimpse of this truth when he prayed: "O, God, make me beautiful within."

This beauty that is permanent cannot be achieved in solitude, it must be sought in society and service, when the soul is freed from self-seeking. In his own way as an artist, Keats hints at this truth in his famous poem entitled: "Endymion." Taking that old moon-myth of classic lore he filled it with all the teeming riches of his own genius and insight, but two great truths may be traced through the poem, written in the dialect of angels, rather than men. One of these is that *the love of all the*

manifold beings on earth is in its nature identical with the love of eternal beauty: and the other, that the soul seeking eternal beauty, being purified, and made free from self. In other words, mortal love is needed to humanize the heavenly, and the heavenly to hallow the mortal, so that the two at their highest and best, are one, uniting the love of God and the love of man, which leads to a beauty of character that is fadeless.

When Plato said: "All that is good is beautiful," he also got near the heart of things. For what is beauty but God's seal upon the universe, and art—man's interpretation of it. One rendering of the word beauty in our text is "pleasantness," "let the pleasantness of the Lord, our God, be upon us." There are some people good, but scarcely amiable. But the beauty of holiness carries with it the idea of completeness, in the sense of progress towards perfection. The existence of beauty shows that God ever works towards perfection, so that things which are frail and short-lived are adorned with beauty no less than things that are durable.

This idea of perfection is included in the Gospel of Christ. By the atonement of Christ, and the ministry of His Spirit, God has made provision for imparting to man an all round completeness. We are offered in the Gospel of Christ a full salvation, a salvation not alone from the penalty due to the grosser sins, but from all that debases the spirit,

stains the character, or mars the beauty and development of the soul's best life.

The moral beauty of God is His Holiness, and suggest the union and perfection of all His attributes. But how can we dare to gaze on that beauty and blending glory? There is an old legend of an artist who once prayed that the veil might be lifted, if only for a moment, so that he might gaze on Absolute Beauty. His prayer was answered, but it paralysed his hand, and broke his heart. After that glimpse of eternal beauty he was so overwhelmed that his finest work became a daub, and he had no heart to go on. Mercifully that awful Presence is veiled, so that we may have liberty to live our little lives; but we can only speak of the Eternal Beauty with faltering lips, because of our frailty and sin.

What then must we do. We cannot look long at God without being dazzled, but let us look at Jesus, who is the express image of His Person, and in Jesus, God's beauty is reflected, and made manifest. On the continent of Europe there is a church which tourists often visit. The ceiling at one part is covever with paintings from the hands of the great masters, but they are so high up the visitor cannot look at them without fatigue. By the simple device of placing a mirror in a suitable position, the pictures are reflected in the mirror, and the visitor can examine their beauty without fatigue at his leisure. So is the Divine Beauty, Divine Glory,

Divine Holiness reflected in the life of Jesus, in a form which we can contemplate without being dazzled and overawed. St. Paul's words are a good application and explanation of this whole subject: "We all with open face behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image (the same beauty) from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

X

THE LANDMARKS OF LIFE

"Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."—I SAMUEL vii: 12.

THE prophet Samuel never did a greater thing in his life than when he raised this memorial stone as a landmark of God's dealings with His people. You may call it sentiment if you will, but who can deny its value. A sentiment is a thought prompted by emotion, or a feeling quickened through some new experience, but are not our finest thoughts so inspired from time to time? Without sentiment life remains cold, formal and friendless. There is no lilt in life apart from sentiment, no cadence, no charm, no glow, no landmark, no red-letter day, in the story of our sojourn on earth.

The simple fact is every life has its landmarks of one sort or another. We may raise no monument, no monolith, no mount to commemorate them, but they are there just the same. For example, there is the landmark of Bethel, the place where a youth or a maiden wakes up to the reality of a living and loving God. There is the landmark of Peniel, the place where one wrestles with God in prayer,

and prevails. There is the landmark of Mara, with its well of bitter waters, where the heart is strained by some great sorrow, almost to the point of breaking. There is the landmark of Elim, with its fountains of sweet waters and its kindly shade of three score and ten palm trees. There is the landmark of Pisgah, with its vision of the Promised Land. There is also the landmark of Ebenezer, which has a place, and a well-defined place, on the map of every human life, that has any experience of God. It is the landmark known as Ebenezer we are to consider at present. When starting out on a new venture we should all erect this landmark, as we exclaim: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Such an experience would make life worth while.

GEOGRAPHICAL LAW

The mapping out of human life in this fashion is not a mere fancy of the passing hour, but a religious duty. While all days are alike on the calendar, they are psychologically different, carrying in their bosom widely different motives and incentives. The close of the year is such an occasion; it appeals to the best possible in each of us. In all ages the people of God have discovered this geographical law in the spiritual world. It is an interesting study to trace how Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians and the writer of that wonderful letter to the Hebrews, have used Old Testament landmarks to point the progress of the upward way. Like the ancient

people of God, we, too, are on the march, and one of our helpful resting places is Ebenezer, where we erect our monument to God and identify our lives with the things that count. It is wonderful to think on how man has endeavoured to associate himself with the permanent landmarks of Nature. In this man shows unmistakably the two-fold side of his own nature—his littleness and his greatness. It reveals his littleness because every such endeavour is a confession on his part of the brevity of our human life; it also shows man's greatness, because he is capable of investing with a halo of romance wild glens, barren rocks, rushing rivers, old monuments erected by human hands to commemorate the past. Now all this has its spiritual counterpart in the story of the soul's life and experience. And Ebenezer is that experience where a man climbs the hill of life, takes a brief rest, erects a memorial in his memory, and looks back on the past with a song on his lips and in his heart. Yet in looking back, he does not forget to look up, and to look on, as he braces himself for the tasks that lie ahead.

THE BACKWARD LOOK

Ebenezer, as a landmark in the soul's life, is a good place from which to look back. It is the place where we say: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," for this "Hitherto" covers all the past. This means perspective, and helps one to understand the ministry of the years that are gone. What a story

this old Stone of Help had to tell of the wonderful dealings of God! It looked back on the patient work of Samuel, who for twenty years had been leading the people homeward to the God of their fathers: twenty years of quiet, unobtrusive toil, like that of the coral insects, building from the ocean bed until at length the palm-clad island appears. It looked back on that memorable convocation of Israel at Mizpeh, when their idols were cast away, and when water was poured out before the Lord, which in the language of Oriental symbolism meant that their souls were poured out in tears and humble confession of sin to God. Above all, it looked back to that memorable moment, where, as the Philistines drew near to battle, "the Lord thundered on the Philistines with a great thunder, and discomfited them, so that they were smitten before Israel." If that old monument had a memory, as well as eyes and ears, it would never forget that great victory, witnessed between Mizpeh and Shen. It would recall to them the fact that on that same spot some twenty years earlier there had been fought the Flodden Field of Israel, in the great battle of Apek, where the people of Israel had been stricken into the dust before their foes.

What living encouragement there is in all this for us today! Some of you at this hour may be traversing battlefields marked by defeat. Your hopes have been dashed to the ground. You may have been overthrown by some besetting sin. Yet,

as you review the past, you are called to take heart of hope. At the very place you have fallen you may conquer. The rocks which saw the leaves of autumn swirl in eddies around you shall yet behold the young green of spring and the mature fruitage of the summer. On looking back today from the landmark of Ebenezer we see that the path traversed was more direct than it appeared to be. There were times when we seemed to go back, seasons when we felt that we were going down; but now we see that in going back we were going forward; that in going down, we were going up; that our hindrances were our helps; that our disappointments were our dearest friends; that our failures were our finest successes, and that our apparent defeats were our most decisive victories. Twenty years before Ebenezer had been the scene of defeat; now it is the place of victory. This is the glory of our religion: it raises the stone of Ebenezer on the fatal field of Apek and turns the Mizpeh of defeat into the morning of victory. Yes; this landmark of Ebenezer is indeed a good place from which to look back on the past. In the long chain of helpfulness there is no missing link, for God's mercies have been one unbroken succession.

THE UPWARD LOOK

Ebenezer, as a landmark in life, is also a good place from which to look up. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." From this second point of view

the emphatic word is "The Lord." If the gods of the Philistines had helped them they had been discredited and destroyed and so at best give but flimsy ground for exaltation to those who trusted in them. If the people of Israel had been delivered by their own prowess there would have been little cause for congratulation or joy; for the strength of man is as grass and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. But it was the Lord who had been their Helper, the great Jehovah, the I Am, the unchangeable and everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary. He was their hope and guarantee for their present experiences, as He had been their shelter in the days that were past. So this landmark of life is a good place from which to look up to the Living God in Christ.

Not long ago some one was commiserated on the smallness of his garden when he replied: "You are quite mistaken; it may not be very long and it may not be very wide, but it is infinitely high; it goes up to the Heavens of God." That was surely a fine answer, full of rich suggestion and spiritual significance. So although Samuel could only look back on some twenty years of leadership and fifty years of existence, he could look up to Heaven and realize that ever with him was the everlasting, ever-living and ever-loving God. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." To our Divine Helper let us here look up.

It is this sense of the Divine Presence that takes

away the sting from all life's disappointments and defeats. The years may pass, but He abides. Life glides away, "like a brook forever changing," but He remains. We frail mortals come and go, like the ships that pass in the night, but God is as fixed as the stars. Fathers and mothers and the friends of our childhood—how many of them are gone, but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting; it endureth for evermore. Whittier in one of his tenderest songs has raised a landmark that is surely an Ebenezer from which he looked back and looked up:

Enough that blessings undeserved
  Have marked my erring track;
That whereso'er my feet have swerved,
  His chastenings turned me back;

That more and more a Providence
  Of love is understood.
Making the springs of time and sense
  Sweet with eternal good.

I know not where His islands lift
  Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
  Beyond His love and care.

THE FORWARD LOOK

Ebenezer is, further, a good place from which to look forward. If this stone has a retrospect, it has also a prospect. It looks not only backward, but forward. It says to us, "As God has helped,

so He will help." The "Hitherto" is changed into the "Henceforward." Indeed, it is very little use our looking back, or looking up, if we are not prepared to look forward, so that a good maxim for every life is "Never do your work twice over." As soon as one fight for God is finished, get engaged in another without delay. Perhaps this maxim might be supplemented by another: "Organize your victories," and I might add, organize your defeats as well. The only justification for looking back, or looking up, is that we may the better look forward.

THE TRYSTING PLACE

Ebenezer is therefore the starting point of a new and better experience; it is the soul's trysting place for a new stretch of the road. In recent years two popular pictures—companions to each other—have been given to the world by Marcus Stone, a well-known modern artist. The first represents a tall, graceful girl, dressed in white, leaning against the massive trunk of an old woodland tree. Her large plumed hat is held in her left hand, which hangs listlessly by her side, while her head is bowed, resting on her right hand, as she leans over two hearts that intersect each other, carved on the bark of the tree. It does not require a vivid imagination to reconstruct her story. Once in the happy past her sailor lover carved that simple symbol, for here in this woodland glade they had pledged their love

each to the other. This picture was called "The Tree of Trysting," a landmark in the happy life of the young lovers. But the artist in the companion picture depicts a scene that looks to the future. He has termed it "His Ship in Sight," and across the blue sea can be seen the vessel speeding along, which bears her sailor lover, so that soon they will meet again beneath the "Tree of Trysting," which looks to the past and the present, and also to the future, the happy future, in which two lives are guided by one great devotion.

The application of all is, use the present opportunity to make your tryst with God. He says: "My son, give Me thine heart." "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Do not forget that a new year on the calendar may be the same old year in the heart. But He who from the throne says: "Behold I make all things new," can give you a new nature and new ideals, so that the new year may be a real landmark for God in your pilgrimage of life.

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